

Bhishma Parva

In the 18-parva classification of the Mahabharata, Bhishma Parva is sixth. This segment covers the first ten days of the war and is named after Bhishma, because Bhishma was the commander during this phase of the battle. Other than Bhishma, no major warriors are killed in this parva which also includes the Bhagavad Gita. This parva has 117 chapters. In the 100-parva classification of the Mahabharata, Sections 61 through 64 constitute Bhishma Parva. In the numbering of the chapters in Bhishma Parva, the first number is a consecutive one, starting with the beginning of the Mahabharata. And the second number, within brackets, is the numbering of the chapter within the parva.

Section Sixty-One

Jambukhanda-Vinirmana Parva

This parva has 378 shlokas and eleven chapters.

Chapter 861(1): 34 shlokas

Chapter 862(2): 33 shlokas

Chapter 863(3): 46 shlokas

Chapter 864(4): 35 shlokas

Chapter 865(5): 21 shlokas

Chapter 866(6): 16 shlokas

Chapter 867(7): 53 shlokas

Chapter 868(8): 31 shlokas

Chapter 869(9): 21 shlokas

Chapter 870(10): 74 shlokas

Chapter 871(11): 14 shlokas

Vinirmana means creation, as well as measuring out, the latter meaning being relevant here. Jambukhanda or Jambudvipa is one of the continents on earth. It is the central one. This section is about geography and is so named because it gives the measure of Jambukhanda.

CHAPTER 861(1)

Janamejaya asked, ‘How did those brave ones, the Kurus, the Pandavas, the Somakas and the extremely fortunate kings who had assembled from many countries, fight?’

Vaishampayana said, ‘O lord of the earth! Listen to how those brave ones, the Kurus, the Pandavas and the Somakas, fought in Kurukshetra, the region where austerities were performed. Arriving in Kurukshetra, the extremely powerful Pandavas, together with the Somakas, were desirous of victory and advanced against the Kouravas. All of them were accomplished in the study of the Vedas and rejoiced at the prospect of

battle. They wished to be victorious in the fight and were ready to be slain in the field of battle. They advanced towards the invincible army of Dhritarashtra's son and, together with their soldiers, set up camp on the western side, facing the east. In the prescribed fashion, Kunti's son, Yudhishtira, instructed that thousands of camps should be set up in the region beyond Samantapanchaka.¹ The entire earth seemed to be devoid of horses, men, chariots and elephants, with only children and the aged remaining. O supreme among kings! That large army was as large as the entire spread of Jambudvipa,² over which the sun radiates heat. All the varnas were together and the expanse covered many yojanas, encompassing in due course, all the regions, rivers, mountains and forests. King Yudhishtira, bull among all men, instructed that the best of food, and every object of enjoyment, should be supplied to them and their mounts. Yudhishtira assigned diverse kinds of signs to them, so that in this fashion, they would know that they belonged to the Pandaveya side.³ With the time for battle having arrived, Kouravya⁴ instructed that all of them should have signs and emblems, so that they might be recognized. When Dhritarashtra's great-minded son saw the tops of the standards of the Parthas, he and all the kings arrayed themselves against the Pandavas. He was in the midst of one thousand elephants and was surrounded by his brothers, with a white umbrella held aloft his head. On seeing Duryodhana thus, all the Pandava soldiers were delighted. All of them blew on giant conch shells and sounded thousands of kettledrums. The Pandavas and the valiant Vasudeva were delighted to see that their soldiers were rejoicing. To delight their warriors, Vasudeva and Dhananjaya, tigers among men who were stationed on their chariot, blew their divine conch shells. Both Panchajanya and Devadatta resounded.⁵ At this, like deer on hearing the sound of a roaring lion, the warriors and the mounts released urine and excrement. At that time, Dhritarashtra's army was frightened on hearing this. A terrible dust arose and nothing could be seen. Enveloped in the dust raised by the soldiers, the sun disappeared. Clouds rained down showers of flesh and blood and this covered all the soldiers. It was extraordinary.

Then, near the ground, a wind arose, carrying small stones. The troops were afflicted with this, but the dust was dispelled. O king! The two armies stood ready and stationed in Kurukshetra, delighted at the prospect of battle, like two turbulent oceans. The encounter between those two armies was extraordinary, like two oceans when the end of a yuga has arrived. When the Kouravas⁶ assembled their armies, the entire earth became empty, with the exception of the aged and children.

‘O bull among the Bharata lineage! Then the Kurus, Pandavas and Somakas had an agreement and established rules of dharma that would be followed in the war. When hostilities ceased, there would be friendliness towards each other, as was the appropriate behaviour earlier. There would be no resort to deceit again. Those engaged in a war of words would be countered with words. Those who had withdrawn from the midst of battle should not be killed under any circumstances. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! A ratha should only fight with a ratha, one on an elephant with another on an elephant, one on a horse with another on a horse and a foot soldier with a foot soldier. Any striking should be in accordance with appropriateness, valour, energy and age and after a challenge had been issued. It should not be against one who was unsuspecting or distressed, or was engaged in fighting with another, or was distracted or retreating. One who was without a weapon or without armour should never be killed. One should never strike charioteers, those carrying burdens,⁷ those carrying weapons and those who sound kettledrums or conch shells. Having concluded this agreement, the Kurus, the Pandavas and the Somakas looked at each other in supreme wonder. Those great-souled bulls among men stationed themselves and together with their soldiers, were extremely delighted in their minds.’

CHAPTER 862(2)

Vaishampayana said, ‘When the terrible war was imminent, the illustrious rishi Vyasa, best among all those who knew all the Vedas and Satyawati’s son, the grandfather of the Bharatas, watched, in the morning and the

evening.⁸ The illustrious one could see the past, the present and the future. He met the king, Vichitravirya's son,⁹ in private, in distress and in sorrow over the evil conduct of his sons and spoke these words.

‘Vyasa said, “O king! The time has arrived for you, your sons and the lords of the earth. They have assembled in battle and will kill each other. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Their time is over and they will be destroyed. Remember that all this is due to destiny and do not sorrow in your mind. O lord of the earth! If you wish to witness the battle, I will give you sight, so that you can see the war.”

‘Dhritarashtra replied, “O supreme among brahmarshis! I do not wish to see my relatives being killed. Through your energy, I wish to hear about the smallest details in this war.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Since he did not wish to see the war, but wished to hear about it, the lord of all boons granted a boon to Sanjaya.¹⁰

‘Vyasa said, “O king! This Sanjaya will describe the war to you. Nothing in this entire battle will remain unseen to him. O king! Having obtained this divine eyesight, Sanjaya will know everything about the battle and will recount it to you. Whether it is evident or hidden, whether it is night or day, Sanjaya will know everything, even if it is thought of in the mind. Weapons will not pierce him. Nor will he be constrained by exhaustion. Gavaigana's son will emerge alive from the battle. O bull among the Bharata lineage! I will spread the deeds of the Kurus and all the Pandavas. Do not sorrow. This was destined a long time ago. Therefore, you should not sorrow. It could not have been averted. Where dharma exists, victory is there.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having spoken in this way, the illustrious great-grandfather¹¹ again spoke to the mighty-armed Dhritarashtra. “O great king!¹² There will be a great destruction in this battle. Many fearful portents can be seen. Hawks, vultures, crows, herons and wild crows are assembling in great numbers at the ends of the forests. These birds are extremely agitated at seeing the prospects of a war. These predators will feed on the flesh of elephants and horses. With the terrible sound of

‘khatakhata’, signifying a calamity, the herons are flying in the centre, towards the southern direction.¹³ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I have always been observing, both at dawn and dusk. When it rises, the sun is covered by headless torsos.¹⁴ They have three colours. They are white and red at the edges and are black in the neck. They are tinged with lightning. They look like clubs and envelope the sun. Irrespective of what time of the day it is, during the day and at night, I have seen the sun, the moon and the stars blazing. This signifies destruction. Even when it is the full moon night in Kartika, the moon is so bereft of radiance that it cannot be seen. It has the complexion of fire and the sky has the same complexion. Heroes, kings and brave princes, with arms like clubs, will be killed. Those brave kings will cover the earth. At night, I always hear a terrible sound in the sky, that of a boar and a cat fighting. The idols of the gods sometimes tremble and sometimes laugh. They vomit blood from their mouths, sweat and fall down. O lord of the earth! Kettledrums sound without being struck. The great chariots of the kshatriyas move, without being yoked. Cuckoos, woodpeckers, blue jays, watercocks, parrots, herons and peacocks utter terrible sounds. When the sun rises, hundreds of locusts can be seen. They are like ornamented warriors wielding arms, armoured and riding on horses. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! At both dawn and dusk, the directions blaze, as if on fire. There are showers of blood and bone. O king! Arundhati is famous and revered by virtuous ones in the three worlds. She moves Vasishtha to the back.¹⁵ O king! Shanaishchara is based in Rohini and is oppressing it. The mark on the moon has disappeared, signifying a great danger.¹⁶ Even when there are no clouds, a great and terrible roar can continuously be heard. The mounts weep and shed drops of tears.’”

CHAPTER 863(3)

‘Vyasa said, “Cows give birth to asses. Sons have intercourse with their mothers. When it is not the season, trees in the forest can be seen to produce flowers and fruit. Princes are pregnant and are giving birth to

monsters. Predatory birds are feeding on other birds and jackals on other animals. Inauspicious animals with terrible teeth are born, with three horns, four eyes, five legs, two penises, two heads and two tails. They have wide open jaws and are emitting inauspicious sounds. There are horses with three feet, crests, four eyes and horns. In your city, the wives of those who are learned about the brahman are seen to give birth to birds and peacocks. O lord of the earth! Mares give birth to calves and she-dogs to jackals. Cocks, mynahs¹⁷ and parrots are uttering inauspicious sounds. Women are giving birth to four and five daughters at the same time. As soon as they are born, they are dancing, singing and laughing. In their houses, inferior ones can be seen to be playing, suckling, dancing and singing. These are signs of a great calamity. Driven by destiny, other children are seen to paint armed men who are running around, with staffs in their hands. Desirous of fighting, they are laying siege to cities. Lotuses, blue lotuses and night-lotuses¹⁸ are growing on trees. Strong winds are blowing and the dust is not abating. The earth is trembling and the sun seems to have been swallowed by Rahu.¹⁹ The white planet has passed beyond Chitra and is established there.²⁰ In particular, all this shows harm for the Kurus. There is an extremely terrible comet and it is based in Pushya and is oppressing it.²¹ This great planet will be inauspicious for the armies. Angaraka is retrograde and is in Magha, while Brihaspati is in Shravana.²² The son of the sun is in Bhaga nakshatra and is oppressing it.²³ O lord of the earth! Shukra is rising towards Purva Proshthapada. Having crossed it, it is glancing towards Uttara.²⁴ The dark planet is blazing, with smoke and fire. It is based in, and is attacking, Indra's energetic nakshatra, Jyeshtha.²⁵ Dhruva is flaming and is circling towards the left in a terrible way.²⁶ The harsh planet is established between Chitra and Svati.²⁷ The one with radiance like the fire is retrograde, having completed its regular course.²⁸ It is full of the energy of the brahman and is red in its body. It is established in Shravana. The

earth that produces fruit is full of every kind of grain.²⁹ Every stalk of barley has five ears and every stalk of paddy a hundred ears. Cattle are the foremost in all the worlds and they sustain the entire universe. When they are milked after calving, they only yield blood.

“The bows radiate rays of light. The swords are flaming terribly. The weapons are seen to be unsheathed. A battle is at hand. The weapons, the water, the armour and the standards are shining with the complexion of the fire, foretelling great destruction. In every direction, animals and birds can be seen, emitting harsh noises and their mouths blazing. This signifies a great calamity. A bird with one wing, one eye and one leg is flying in the sky at night. It is screaming terribly, repeatedly vomiting blood. The blazing planets are stationed, with copper-red crests. But the radiance of saptarshi³⁰ has been dimmed. The two blazing planets, Brihaspati and Shani, are near Vishakha³¹ and have become stationary for a year. The terrible planet is established like a comet and has robbed Kritika, the first among nakshatras in brilliance, of its radiance.³² O lord of the earth! The nakshatras were earlier classified into three groups.³³ Budha’s³⁴ glances are descending on them and this engenders great fear. Earlier, the night of the new moon used to be on the fourteenth, fifteenth or sixteenth lunar day. But like now, I do not know of it occurring on the thirteenth. On the thirteenth lunar day and in the same month, eclipses of the sun and the moon took place. These eclipses occurred at the wrong times, signifying a destruction of living beings. All the directions are covered in dust and dust is showering everywhere. There are terrible and ill portents in the clouds. Blood showers down in the night. There are also terrible showers of flesh on the fourteenth day of the dark lunar fortnight. The rakshasas are not satiated and utter terrible roars in the middle of the night. The great rivers are flowing in the opposite direction and water has turned into blood. The wells are foaming and roaring like bulls. Meteors are descending with roars, inter-mingled with dry thunder.³⁵ It is now night and the impaired sun will arise at dawn. Giant and fiery meteors have covered everything in

the four directions. Maharshis have said that when the sun is thus afflicted, the earth will drink the blood of thousands of kings. From Kailasa and Mandara and also from the Himalaya mountains, thousands of sounds are heard, as the summits fall down. There are giant tremors in the ground and because of this, the four oceans are repeatedly overflowing their shores. Fierce winds that are full of pebbles are blowing, crushing the trees. In villages, towns and sanctuaries, trees are falling down. When brahmanas pour oblations into the fire, it becomes yellow, red or blue. The flames bend to the left and have a bad smell. They are generally full of smoke and make harsh sounds. O lord of the earth! Touch, smell and taste have become contrary. The standards of kings tremble repeatedly and emit smoke. Kettledrums and war drums release showers of coal dust. From the tops of palaces and the gates of cities, vultures form circles and fly to the left, uttering terrible cries. They are uttering terrible cries of ‘paka, paka’³⁶ and so are the crows. They are perching on the tops of standards and this forebodes the destruction of the kings. Distressed and weeping horses and thousands of elephants are trembling and are running here and there, releasing urine and dung. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having heard this and the time having arrived, do what is necessary, so that the world does not head towards destruction.”

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having heard the words of his father, Dhritarashtra said, “I think that all of this has been ordained earlier and there is no doubt that it will happen. If there is a battle and kshatriyas kill, in accordance with the dharma of kshatriyas, they will attain the world of heroes and only obtain happiness. These tigers among men will give up their lives in this great battle and will obtain fame in this world and great happiness for a long time in the other world.”’

CHAPTER 864(4)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O supreme among kings! Having been thus addressed by his son Dhritarashtra, the sage who is an Indra among wise ones, engaged in supreme meditation. The greatly ascetic one, who knew

about time, then again spoke these words. ‘O Indra among kings! There is no doubt that time destroys the universe. It again creates the worlds. There is nothing that is eternal. Show the path of dharma to your relatives, the Kurus, your kin and your well-wishers. You are capable of restraining them. It has been said that the slaughter of relatives is inferior. Do what brings me pleasure. O lord of the earth! Death himself has been born in the form of your son. Slaughter has not been praised in the Vedas. It can never be beneficial. He who kills, kills the dharma of his lineage, and it is like killing one’s own body. Destiny has brought you to this path, though you are capable of following the path of virtue. In the form of the kingdom, calamity looms and makes you give up what brings happiness, for the destruction of the lineage and the earth. Your wisdom has suffered greatly. Show your sons dharma. O unassailable one! What is there in a kingdom, if one obtains sin with it? Preserve your fame, dharma and deeds and go to heaven. Let the Pandavas obtain their kingdom and the Kouravas obtain peace.” Thus, the Indra among brahmanas sorrowfully spoke these words to Ambika’s son, Dhritarashtra, and the one who was skilled in speech again spoke these words.

‘Dhritarashtra said, “My knowledge of what exists and what does not exist is like yours. I know the exact truth. O father! But people are deluded because of selfishness. Know me to be such an ordinary person. O one whose power is unmatched! Through your favours, show me the firm direction. O maharshi! They are not under my control. I do not desire to commit a sin. You represent sacred dharma, fame, deeds, fortitude and learning. You are the revered grandfather of the Kurus and the Pandavas.”

‘Vyasa replied, “O Vichitravirya’s son! O king! Openly tell me what is in your mind. As you wish, I will dispel your doubts.”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “There are signs that portent victory in a battle. O illustrious one! I wish to hear exactly about these.”

‘Vyasa replied, “The fire³⁷ has a cheerful radiance and its flames rise up straight. It circles to the right and the crest is devoid of smoke. The oblations offered have a sacred fragrance. These are said to be the signs of victory. When the conch shells and drums are sounded, there is a great and

deep sound. The sun and the moon have pure rays. These are said to be the signs of victory. Whether they are seated or flying, the crows utter beneficial cries. O king! Those who are at the back urge an advance, while those at the front urge restraint.³⁸ When vultures, swans, parrots, cranes and woodpeckers utter beneficial cries and circle to the right, the brahmanas say that victory in a battle is certain. When the ornaments, armour and flags are golden in complexion and radiant, incapable of being looked at, such men obtain the favours of happiness and defeat the soldiers of the enemies. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When spirited warriors utter happy shouts and when their garlands do not fade, they overcome their enemies in battle. Those who utter kind words before penetrating enemy formations and those who warn before striking are victorious. When hearing, sight, taste, touch and smell are undistorted and auspicious and the warriors are always happy, victory is certain. Winds that blow, clouds, crows become favourable and so are the showers from clouds and rainbows. O lord of the earth! These are the signs of victory. O lord of men! But if these are contrary, that is a sign of death. Whether the army is small or large, the cheerfulness of the masses of warriors is said to be a certain sign of victory. If a single warrior is frightened, he can cause an extremely large army to be alarmed and flee, even those who are brave warriors. If a large army is broken up, it is incapable of being rallied. It is like a herd of deer frightened by the mighty force of the water. Once a great army is routed, it is incapable of being rallied. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing it shattered, even brave warriors become dejected. On seeing the fright and the flight, the fear increases in every direction. O king! The army is suddenly scattered and is destroyed by the enemy. O lord of the earth! Even a brave one, a leader of many soldiers of the four types,³⁹ is incapable of rallying such a giant army. An intelligent person always endeavours and always looks for ways. It is said that success through negotiations is the best, and that through dissension⁴⁰ is medium. O lord of the earth! Victory obtained through battle is the worst. There are many great evils associated with fighting and slaughter is said to

be the first. Even fifty brave ones who know each other, are cheerful, are not bound by family ties and are firm in their resolution, can crush a large army. Even five, six or seven can ensure victory, as long as they do not retreat. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Vinata's son, Garuda, does not seek a large number of followers for assistance, when he sees a large number of birds.⁴¹ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The number of soldiers does not ensure victory. Victory is uncertain. That depends on destiny. Even those who are victorious in battle, have to suffer losses.”

CHAPTER 865(5)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O intelligent one! Having spoken these words to Dhritarashtra, Vyasa departed. On hearing these words, Dhritarashtra meditated on them. Having thought about them for some time, he sighed repeatedly. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He asked Sanjaya, the one whose soul was controlled. “O Sanjaya! Those brave lords of the earth are delighted at the prospect of battle. They wish to strike each other with different kinds of weapons. For the sake of the earth, those lords of the earth are prepared to give up their lives. They will not be pacified. They will strike each other to increase the numbers in Yama's abode. Desiring earthly prosperity, they will not tolerate each other. O Sanjaya! Therefore, I think that the earth must possess many qualities. Tell me about them. Many thousands, millions, tens of millions and hundreds of millions of brave people have gathered in Kurujangala.⁴² O Sanjaya! I wish to hear the exact details of the expanse of the countries and cities from which they have come. Through the favours of the brahmana rishi Vyasa, whose energy is infinite, you possess the lamp of divine intelligence and the eyesight of knowledge.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O immensely wise one! According to my wisdom, I will tell you about the qualities of the earth. Behold them with the eyesight of the sacred texts. O bull among the Bharata lineage! I bow down before you. There are two kinds of beings in this world, mobile and immobile. Depending on birth, mobile beings are of three kinds—those born from

eggs, those from sweat⁴³ and those from wombs. O king! Out of all mobile beings, those born from wombs are the best. Of those born from wombs, humans and animals are supreme. O king! They⁴⁴ have diverse forms and are divided into fourteen groups. Seven dwell in the forest and seven live in villages.⁴⁵ O king! Lions, tigers, boars, buffaloes, elephants, bears and monkeys—these seven are said to be forest dwellers. Cattle, goats, men, sheep, horses, mules and donkeys—these seven are considered to be village dwellers by righteous ones. O king! These are the fourteen kinds of animals, domestic and wild. O lord of the earth! These have been mentioned in the Vedas and sacrifices are established on them. Out of domestic ones, men are the best and lions among wild ones. All beings sustain their lives by living on each other. Those that are immobile are said to be *udbhijas* and these have five species—trees, shrubs, creepers, plants and those without stems, of the species of grass.⁴⁶ There are thus nineteen kinds.⁴⁷ They have five universal constituents.⁴⁸ There are twenty-four all together. These are described as *gayatri* and this is known to the world.⁴⁹ He who truly knows all these to be the sacred *gayatri*, possesses all the qualities. O foremost among the Bharata lineage! He will not be destroyed. Everything is born from the earth. When destroyed, everything goes into the earth. All beings are established in the earth. The earth is eternal. He who possesses the earth, possesses all the mobile and immobile objects in the universe. That is why the kings desire it and are prepared to kill each other.”

CHAPTER 866(6)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! O one who knows about the measure of different things! Tell me about the names and the measures of rivers, mountains, places inhabited by people, everything else on earth and forests. O Sanjaya! Tell me everything.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O great king! Because everything in the earth is based on the five universal constituents, the learned regard all of them as

equal. These are bhumi, apa, vayu, agni and akasha. Each of them does not possess a quality from the preceding one. Therefore, bhumi is the foremost, as has been said by the rishis who know the truth about the qualities. These are sound, touch, sight and taste, with smell as the fifth.⁵⁰ O king! There are four qualities in apa, it does not possess smell. There are three qualities in tejas—sound, touch and sight. Vayu has sound and touch, while akasha has only sound. O king! These five qualities exist in the five constituents of matter, and beings in all the worlds are established on them. When there is homogeneity, they exist separately and independently.⁵¹ When they do not exist in their natural state, they depend on each other and embodied beings are created. There is no exception to this. They are destroyed, with the one that succeeds merging into the one that precedes it. They are created in that way too, with each resulting from the one that precedes it.⁵² All of them cannot be measured. Their forms are those of the lord himself.⁵³ Beings consisting of the five bhutas are seen in the universe. Men use reason to try and identify their measure.⁵⁴ But these are things that cannot be thought of. They cannot be fathomed through reason. They are beyond nature and this is a sign that they are inconceivable. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! I will now tell you about the island named Sudarshana.⁵⁵ O great king! This island is circular and in the form of a wheel. It is full of rivers and other waterbodies. It has mountains that look like masses of clouds. It has cities of different types and beautiful countries. It has trees laden with flowers and fruits and is prosperous, with riches and crops. It is surrounded in every direction by the salty ocean. Just as a man can see his own face in a mirror, the island Sudarshana can be seen in the disc of the moon. Two of its parts look like the *pippala*⁵⁶ and two others look like a large hare. It is surrounded on all sides with every kind of medicinal plants. Besides this, everything else is water, and listen as I briefly describe this to you.”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! You have briefly described that island. Now tell me about it in detail. Tell me about that part of the land that looks like a hare. Then tell me about the measure of the part that looks like a pippala.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Thus addressed by the king, Sanjaya spoke these words.

“O great king!⁵⁷ From the east to the west, there are six mountains that are full of jewels. In both directions, they are immersed in the eastern and western ocean. They are named Himavan; Hemakuta; Nishadha, supreme among mountains; Nila, full of lapis lazuli; Shveta, with the complexion of silver; and the mountains known as Shringavan, made up of every kind of mineral. O king! These are mountains frequented by siddhas and charanas. The distance from one to the other is one thousand yojanas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There are many sacred countries or *varshas*. In all of these, dwell many different kinds of beings. This is the varsha known as Bharata and the one known as Himavat comes after that. The region known as Harivarsha is beyond Hemakuta. O great king! To the south of Nila and to the north of Nishadha, is a mountain named Malyavan that stretches from the east to the west. Beyond Malyavan is the mountain known as Gandhamadana. Between these two,⁵⁸ there is the circular and golden mountain of Meru. It is as radiant as the rising sun, or a fire without smoke. O lord of the earth! It is said to be 84,000 yojanas high and 84,000 yojanas deep.⁵⁹ The worlds are established on it, above and diagonally. O lord! There are four islands along its sides. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! These are Bhadrashva, Ketumala, Jambudvipa and Uttara Kuru, the abode of those who have performed virtuous deeds. The bird Sumukha, Suparna’s⁶⁰ son, saw that all the birds on Meru had golden feathers and thought that there was no difference there between superior, average and inferior birds. He therefore decided to leave the place. The supreme among stellar bodies, the sun, always revolves around it.⁶¹ So do the moon, all the nakshatras and Vayu.⁶² O great king! That mountain is

full of divine flowers and fruit. It is full of mansions that are made out of polished gold. O king! The masses of gods, gandharvas, asuras, rakshasas and masses of apsaras always go to that mountain to sport there. Brahma, Rudra and Shakra, the lord of the gods, assemble there, to perform different kinds of sacrifices, with a lot of donations. Tumburu, Narada, Vishvavasu, Haha and Huhu⁶³ went there and satisfied the foremost among immortals with different kinds of hymns. O fortunate one! The seven sages, and the great-souled Kashyapa Prajapati, always go there on the day of the new moon and the full moon. O lord of the earth! Kavya Ushanas⁶⁴ also goes to the summit, with the *daityas*. The jewels that exist in all the mountains come from the jewels there. A fourth part of those is enjoyed by the illustrious Kubera. He gives only a sixteenth part of those riches to men.

“On its northern side is the divine, auspicious and beautiful forest of Karnikara. It is full of flowers everywhere and extends across several mountains. The illustrious Pashupati⁶⁵ himself, the creator of beings, sports there, surrounded by divine beings and accompanied by Uma. He wears a radiant garland of *karnikara* flowers⁶⁶ that extends down to his feet. His three eyes blaze, like three rising suns. The Siddhas are extremely terrible in their austerities. They are excellent in their vows and truthful and can see him. Those who are evil in conduct are incapable of seeing Maheshvara. O lord of men! A stream of milk issues from the summit of that mountain. This is the sacred and auspicious Ganga, the beautiful Bhagirathi. She has three flows⁶⁷ and is worshipped by the virtuous. She flows with a terrible roar. With great force, she descends into the beautiful lake Chandramas. That sacred lake is like an ocean and has been created from her. Even the mountains are incapable of bearing her. But in earlier times, Maheshvara bore her on his head for a hundred thousand years.

“O lord of the earth! Ketumala is on the western side of Meru. Jambukhandas is also there and is extremely large.⁶⁸ It is like Nandana.⁶⁹

O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The lifespan there is ten thousand years. The men have golden complexions and the women are like apsaras. Everyone is without disease and devoid of sorrow. They are always delighted in their minds. Humans born there have the complexion of molten gold. On the summit of Gandhamadana, Kubera, lord of the guhyakas, spends his time in delight, with the rakshasas and surrounded by masses of apsaras. There are smaller mountains and hills at the feet of Gandhamadana. The maximum lifespan there is eleven thousand years. O king! The men there are dark, energetic and extremely strong. All the women have the complexion of lotuses and are extremely beautiful to look at. Shveta is beyond Nila and Hiranyaka is beyond Nila.⁷⁰ The varsha named Airavata is bounded by Shringavat.⁷¹ O great king! The two varshas to the south and the north are in the form of a bow. Ilavrita is in the middle of the five varshas.⁷² A varsha that is towards the north surpasses one to its south in qualities like lifespan, stature, health, dharma, kama and artha. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Beings live together in these varshas. O great king! The earth is thus covered with mountains. The large mountain Hemakuta also has the name of Kailasa. O king! Vaishravana⁷³ sports there with the guhyakas. To the north of Kailasa and near Mount Mainaka, there is the large and divine Mount Manimaya, with a golden peak. To its side,⁷⁴ there is the large, divine, auspicious and beautiful Vindusara,⁷⁵ with golden sand. After having seen Ganga Bhagirathi, King Bhagiratha lived there for many years. There are many sacrificial stakes made out of gems there and sanctuaries made out of gold. The immensely famous one with a thousand eyes⁷⁶ attained salvation there. The creator Bhutapati,⁷⁷ the eternal lord of all beings, supreme in his energy, is worshipped there, surrounded by his followers. Nara, Narayana, Brahma, Manu and Sthanu,⁷⁸ as the fifth, are always present there. The goddess with the three flows⁷⁹ first showed herself there. She emerged from Brahma's world and divided herself into seven

streams—Vasvokasara, Nalini, the sin-cleansing Sarasvati, Jambunadi,⁸⁰ Sita, Ganga and Sindhu as the seventh. She is inconceivable and divine and the lord himself⁸¹ thought of ways of dividing her. At the end of a yuga, it is there that sacrifices have been performed on a thousand occasions. The Sarasvati can be seen sometimes and sometimes she is invisible. Ganga, with the seven flows, is thus famous in the three worlds.

“The rakshasas live on Himavat, the guhyakas on Hemakuta. The *sarpas*, the *nagas*,⁸² the *nishadas* and those rich in austerities live on Gokarna. Shveta mountain is said to be the abode of gods and asuras. O king! The gandharvas live on Mount Nishadha and brahmarshis on Nila. O great king! Shringavat is where the ancestors wander around. O great king! These are the divisions into seven varshas. Diverse types of mobile and immobile beings are placed in them. Different types of prosperity, divine and human, can be seen in them. This is incapable of being described. But those who desire their own welfare, have faith in them. O king! You asked me about the divine region that is in the form of a hare and I have told you. On two sides of the hare, to the north and to the south, there are two varshas. The ears⁸³ are Nagadvipa and Kashyapadvipa. O king! The head is the beautiful Mount Malaya, with the hue of copper. This is the second part of the dvipa that has the shape of a hare.”

CHAPTER 868(8)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! What is to the north and on the eastern side of Meru? O immensely intelligent one! Tell me everything about Mount Malyavan.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O king! To the south of Nila and on the northern side of Meru is Uttara Kuru, inhabited by the siddhas. The trees there yield sweet fruit and are always full of flowers and fruit. The flowers have excellent fragrance and the fruits are succulent. O lord of men! Some of the trees there yield fruit that satisfy every desire. O lord of men! Other trees there are known as those that yield milk. They yield milk that is like

amrita, with the six different kinds of taste.⁸⁴ They also yield garments⁸⁵ and the fruits are also ornaments. The entire ground is strewn with jewels and fine golden sand. O lord of men! Everything is pleasant to the touch and there is no mud. The men who are born there are those who have been dislodged from the world of the gods. Whether on plain or uneven terrain, everyone is similar in beauty and qualities. Twins are born there and the women are the equals of apsaras. They drink the milk there and the milk is like amrita. When the twins are born, they grow up equally. They are similar in beauty and qualities and wear similar garments. O lord! Like *chakravakas*,⁸⁶ they are devoted to each other. They are without disease, devoid of sorrow and always delighted in their minds. O great king! They live for eleven thousand years and never abandon each other. There is a bird named Bharunda. It has sharp beaks and is extremely strong. When they die, this picks up the dead and hurls them into mountainous caverns. O king! I have briefly described Uttara Kuru to you.

“I will now describe the eastern side of Meru to you exactly. O lord of the earth! Bhadrashva is the first. There is a forest of *bhadrasala*⁸⁷ there and a large tree named Kalamra. O great king! Kalamra is beautiful and always has flowers and fruit. This dvipa is one yojana in expanse and is frequented by siddhas and charanas. The men there are white and possess energy and great strength. The women there are lovely. They are beautiful to look at and have the complexion of the moon. They have the radiance of the moon. They have the complexion of the moon. Their faces are like the full moon. Their bodies are as cool as the moon and they are skilled in dancing and singing. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The lifespan there is ten thousand years. They always remain young by drinking the juice of Kalamra. To the south of Nila and to the north of Nishadha, there is a large and eternal jambu tree by the name of Sudarshana. It has fruits that provide every object of desire. It is sacred and is worshipped by the siddhas and charanas. The eternal Jambudvipa owes its naming to this. O bull among the Bharata lineage! That king of trees rises up to heaven. O lord of men! It is one thousand and one hundred yojanas tall. When

measured by hand, the fruit of that is two thousand and five hundred cubits in circumference. When ripe, it bursts and falls down on the ground with a loud noise. O king! It releases a juice that is silvery in colour. O lord of men! The juice of the jambu fruit becomes a river. Having circled Meru, this goes to Uttara Kuru. O lord of men! People are always delighted at having drunk this juice. Having drunk the juice of this fruit, they do not suffer from old age. There is a gold named Jambunada there and it is used for divine ornaments. Men who are born there have the complexion of the rising sun. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The fire known as Samvartaka blazes on the summit of Malyavan. This is the fire of destruction. On the summit of Malyavan, towards the east, are smaller mountains. Malyavan extends for one thousand and fifty yojanas. Men who are born there have the complexion of gold.⁸⁸ They have all been dislodged from Brahma's world and are knowledgeable about the brahman. They torment themselves through austerities and hold up their semen. For the sake of protecting beings, they enter the sun. There are sixty-six thousand of them.⁸⁹ They surround the sun and travel ahead of the sun. Having been heated by the sun for sixty-six thousand years, they enter the lunar circle.”

CHAPTER 869(9)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! Tell me the names of the varshas and the mountains. And tell me accurately about those who dwell in the mountains.”

‘Sanjaya said, “To the south of Shveta and to the north of Nila, is the varsha named Ramanaka.⁹⁰ Men who are born there are white in complexion. All of them are extremely handsome to look at. The people born there are fond of sexual pleasures. O great king! Happy in their minds, they live for eleven thousand and five hundred years. To the south and to the north of Mount Shveta, is the varsha named Hairanyavat⁹¹ and the river Hairanvati. O great king! Everyone there is rich, handsome and a follower of the yakshas. O king! They are extremely strong and are always

delighted in their minds. O lord of men! The lifespan there is eleven thousand and five hundred years. O lord of men! Shringavat has three peaks. One is made of jewels and another is extraordinary and is made of gold. Another has jewels everywhere and is adorned with beautiful mansions. The goddess Shandili,⁹² who illuminates herself, always resides there. O lord of men! To the north of that peak and on the frontiers of the ocean, is the varsha named Airavata,⁹³ which is supreme because of Shringavan. The sun does not heat there. Men do not decay there. The moon and the nakshatras cover⁹⁴ and are the only source of illumination there. Humans who are born there have the radiance of lotuses, the complexion of lotuses, eyes that are like the petals of lotuses and fragrance like the petals of lotuses. They do not blink their eyes. Extremely fragrant, they do not partake of food and are in control of their senses. O king! All of them have been dislodged from the world of the gods and are without sin. O lord of men! O supreme among Bharatas! Men have a lifespan of thirteen thousand years there. The lord Hari dwells to the north of the milky ocean, in Vaikuntha. His chariot is made out of gold and has eight wheels. It is yoked to beings and has the speed of the mind. It has the complexion of fire and is extremely swift. It is embellished with gold. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He is the lord of all beings and all prosperity. He is finite and infinite. He is the one who acts. He is the one who makes everyone act. O king! He is earth, water, sky, wind and energy. He is the sacrifice for all beings. The fire is his mouth.”

Vaishampayana said, ‘O lord of men! Having been thus addressed by Sanjaya, the high-minded king, Dhritarashtra, meditated about his sons. O great king! Having thought, he again spoke these words. “O son of a suta! There is no doubt that time destroys the universe and creates everything again. There is nothing that is eternal. Nara and Narayana know everything and hold up all beings. The gods call him Vaikuntha and he is known as Lord Vishnu.⁹⁵”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “Tell me about Bharatavarsha, where this senseless army has gathered, and for which, my son Duryodhana is so avaricious. The sons of Pandu desire it and my mind is immersed in it. O Sanjaya! I am asking you, because you are skilled.”

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! Listen to my words. The Pandavas are not covetous about this. It is Duryodhana who covets it, and so does Shakuni Soubala. There are other kshatriyas, who are the kings of many countries, who are greedy about Bharatavarsha and cannot tolerate each other. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I will now describe to you the land that is named after Bharata.⁹⁶ O king! This is loved by the god Indra, Vaivasvata Manu,⁹⁷ Prithu Vainya,⁹⁸ the great-souled Ikshvaku,⁹⁹ Yayati,¹⁰⁰ Ambarisha,¹⁰¹ Mandhata,¹⁰² Nahusha,¹⁰³ Muchukunda,¹⁰⁴ Shibi Oushinara,¹⁰⁵ Rishabha,¹⁰⁶ Aila,¹⁰⁷ King Nriga¹⁰⁸ and other powerful kshatriyas. O great king! O Indra among kings! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O scorcher of enemies! All of them loved Bharata and I will describe this varsha as I have heard it.

“O king! Listen as I tell you what you have asked. Mahendra, Malaya, Shuktiman, Rikshavan, Vindhya, Pariyatra—these are the seven noble mountains.¹⁰⁹ O king! Near them, there are thousands of other mountains that are unknown. They are full of substance and large, with beautiful foothills. There are other unknown and inferior mountains, inhabited by those who have inferior means of subsistence. O Kouravya! O lord! There are aryas and *mlecchas*¹¹⁰ and men from mixed lineage. O lord of men! O Kourava! They drink water from the rivers—the great Ganga, Sindhu, Sarasvati, Godavari, Narmada, the great river Bahuda,¹¹¹ Shatadru,¹¹² Chandrabhaga,¹¹³ the great river Yamuna, Drishadvati,¹¹⁴ Vipasha,¹¹⁵ Vipapa, Sthulavaluka, the river Vetravati,¹¹⁶ the downward-flowing Krishnavena,¹¹⁷ Iravati,¹¹⁸ Vitasta,¹¹⁹ Payoshni,¹²⁰ Devika,¹²¹ Vedasmriti, Vetasini, Trideva, Ikshumalini, Karishini, Chitravaha, the downward-flowing Chitrasena, Gomati, Dhutapapa, the great river

Vandana, Koushiki,¹²² Trideva,¹²³ Kritya, Vichitra, Lohatarini, Rathastha, Shatakumbha, Sarayu,¹²⁴ Charmanvati,¹²⁵ Vetravati,¹²⁶ Hastisoma, Disha, Shatavari, Payoshni,¹²⁷ Bhaimarathi, Kaveri, Chuluka, Vapi, Shatabala, Nichira, Mahita, Suproyaga, Pavitra, Kundala, Sindhu,¹²⁸ Vajini, Puramalini, Purvabhira, Vira, Bhima,¹²⁹ Oghavati,¹³⁰ Palashini, Papahara, Mahendra, Pippalavati, Parishena, Asikni,¹³¹ Sarala, Bharamardini, Puruhi, Pravara, Mena, Mogha, Ghritavati, Dhumatyamati, Krishna, Suchi, Chhavi, Sadanira, Adhrishya, the great river Kushadhara, Shashikanta, Shiva, Viravati, Vastu, Suvastu, Gouri, Kampana, Hiranvati, Hiranvati,¹³² Chitravati, the downward-flowing Chitrasena,¹³³ Rathachitra, Jyotiratha, Vishvamitra, Kapinjala, Upendra, Bahula, Kuchara, Ambuvahini, Vainandi, Pinjala, Venna,¹³⁴ the great river Tungavenu, Vidisha, Krishnavenna,¹³⁵ Tamra, Kapila, Shalu, Suvama, Vedashva, the great river Harisrava, Shighra, Picchila, the downward-flowing Bharadvaji, the downward-flowing Koushiki,¹³⁶ Shona,¹³⁷ Bahuda,¹³⁸ Chandana,¹³⁹ Durgamanta, Shila, Brahmamedhya, Brihadvati, Charaksha, Mahirohi, Jambunadi, Sunasa, Tamasa,¹⁴⁰ Dasi, Trasamanya, Varanasi,¹⁴¹ Lola, Adhritakara, the great river Purnasha, Manavi and the great river Purnasha. O lord of men! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There are others—Sadaniramaya, Vritya, Mandaga, Mandavahini, Brahmani, Mahagouri, Durga, Chitropala, Chitrabarha, Manju, Makaravahini, Mandakini,¹⁴² Vaitarani,¹⁴³ the great river Koka, Shuktimati, Maranya, Pushpaveni, Utpalavati, Lohitya,¹⁴⁴ Karatoya,¹⁴⁵ Vrishabhangini, Kumari, Rishikulya, Brahmakulya, Sarasvati, Supunya, Sarva and the revered Ganga. O lord of men! All of these are mothers of the universe. All of them are extremely strong.¹⁴⁶ Other than these, there are hundreds and thousands of other rivers. O king! To the extent I remember, I have described these rivers to you.

“After this, listen to me as I recount the names of countries. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They are Kuru, Panchala, Shalva, Madreya, Jangala, Shurasena, Kalinga, Bodha, Mouka, Matsya, Sukuta, Soubala, Kuntala, Kashi, Koshala, Chedi, Vatsa, Karusha, Bhoja, Sindhu, Pulinda, Uttamouja, Dasharna, Mekala, Utkala, Panchala, Koushija, Ekaprishtha, Yugandhara, Soudha, Madra, Bhujinga, Kashi,¹⁴⁷ Parakashi, Jathara, Kukkusha, Sudasharna, Kunti, Avanti, Parakunti, Govinda, Mandaka, Shanda, Vidarbha, Upavasika, Ashmaka, Pamsurashtra, Goparashtra, Panitaka, Adirashtra, Sukutta, Balirashtra, Kerala,¹⁴⁸ Vanarasya, Pravaha, Vakra, Vakrabhaya, Shaka, Videha, Magadha, Suhma, Vijaya, Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Yakrillomana, Malla, Sudeshna, Prahuta, Mahisha, Karshika, Vahika, Vatadhana, Abhira, Kalatoya, Aparandhra, Shudra, Pahlava, Charmakhandika, Atavi, Shabara, Marubhouma, Marisha, Upavrisha, Anupavrisha, Surashtra, Kekaya, Kuttaparanta, Dvaidheya, Kaksha, Samudranishkuta and Andhra. O king! O lord of men! There are other mountainous regions and regions on the outside of the mountains—Angamalada, Magadha, Manavarjaka, Mahyuttara, Pravrisheya, Bhargama, Pundra, Bharga, Kirata, Sudoshna, Pramuda, Shaka, Nishada, Nishadha, Anarta, Nairrita, Dugula, Pratimatsya, Kushala, Kunata, Tiragraha, Taratoya, Rajika, Ramyakagana, Tilaka, Parasika, Madhumanta, Prakutsaka, Kashmira, Sindhu, Souvira, Gandhara, Darshaka, Abhisara, Kuluta, Shaibala, Bahlika, Darvika, Sakacha, Darva, Vataja, Amaratha, Uraga, Bahuvadya, Kouravya, Sudamana, Sumallika, Vaghra, Karisha, Kashi,¹⁴⁹ Kulinda, Upatyaka, Vanayu, Dashaparshva, Romana, Kushabindu, Kaccha, Gopalakaccha, Langala, Paravallaka, Kirata, Barbara, Siddha, Videha,¹⁵⁰ Tamralingaka, Oushtra, Pundra, Sairandhra, Parvatiya and Marisha. O bull among the Bharata lineage! There are other countries to the south—Dravida, Kerala,¹⁵¹ Prachya, Bhushika, Vanavasina, Unnatyaka, Mahishaka, Vikalpa, Bhushaka, Karnika, Kuntika, Soudrida, Nalakalaka, Koukuttaka, Chola, Konkana, Malavana, Samanga, Kopana, Kukura, Angadamarisha, Dhvajini, Utsava, Sanketa, Trigarta, Sarvaseni, Tryanga, Kekaraka, Proshtha, Parasancharaka, Vindhya, Pulaka,

Pulinda, Kalkala, Malaka, Mallaka, Paravartaka, Kulinda, Kulika, Karantha, Kuraka, Mushaka, Stanavala, Satiya, Pattipanjaka, Adidaya, Sirala, Stuvaka, Stanapa, Hrishividharbha, Kantika, Tangana and Paratangana. O supreme among the Bharata lineage! There are other mleccha people to the north—Yavana, Kamboja, Daruna, other mleccha people, Sakshadruha, Kuntala, Huna, Parataka, Maradha, China and Dashamalika. These are inhabited by others born from kshatriya, vaishya and shudra lineages. There are *shudra-abhiras*, Daradas, Kashmiras, Pashus, Svashikas, Tukharas, Pallavas, Girigahvaras, Atreyas, Bharadvajas, Stanayoshikas, Oupakas, Kalingas, different races of *kiratas*,¹⁵² Tamaras, Hamsamargas and Karabhanjakas.

“O lord! I have only given brief indications about these countries. If the earth and its qualities and strengths are properly used, it becomes like a milch cow that yields objects of desires and leads to the great fruit of the three objectives.¹⁵³ The brave kings who know about dharma and artha are covetous of these. Because of greed for these riches, they have readily agreed to give up their lives in battle. The earth is the refuge and is desired by those who have the bodies of gods and men. O foremost among the Bharata lineage! The kings desire to enjoy the earth and have become like dogs that are trying to snatch meat from each other. Their desires will never be satisfied. O king! It is for this reason that the Kurus and the Pandavas have tried to obtain the possession of the earth through conciliation, gifts, dissension and chastisement.¹⁵⁴ O bull among men! If the earth is looked after well, she becomes the father, the mother, the son and heaven for all beings.”

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‘Dhritarashtra said, “O suta! O Sanjaya! Tell me about the dimensions, the lifespan, the good and evil fruits and the past, present and future of Bharatavarsha, Haimavat and Harivarsha. Tell me in detail.”

‘Sanjaya said, “O bull among the Bharata lineage! O extender of the Kuru lineage! There are four yugas in Bharatavarsha—*krita*, *treta*,

dvapara and *pushya*.¹⁵⁵ O lord! The first is *krita yuga* and after that *treta yuga* follows. *Dvapara* comes after that and *pushya* follows thereafter. O supreme among Kurus! O supreme among kings! The measure of the lifespan in *krita yuga* is said to be four thousand years. O lord of men! That of *treta* is three thousand years. In the present one of *dvapara*, it is two thousand. O bull among the Bharata lineage! No fixed lifespan has been prescribed for *pushya*. People will die in the womb, or once they are born. O king! Men are born in *krita* and have offspring who are immensely strong, great in spirit and possess all the qualities. There are sages and those rich in austerities. O king! They are great in their endeavour, great-souled, devoted to *dharma* and truthful. O king! Those born in *krita yuga* are rich and handsome, with long lifespans. *Kshatriyas* born in *treta yuga* are extremely brave warriors, supreme among those who wield bows. Those brave ones are emperors.¹⁵⁶ O great king! When *dvapara* begins, all the *varnas* have great endeavour and great valour. But they seek to kill each other. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Those who are born in *pushya* are limited in their energy and men are wrathful. They are greedy and untruthful. They suffer from jealousy, vanity, anger, deception and malice. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There is wrath and greed on earth in *pushya*. O king! O lord of men! The part that remains of *dvapara* is very small.¹⁵⁷ Haimavat is superior to Harivarsha in all qualities and so on.”¹⁵⁸

Section Sixty-Two

Bhumi Parva

This parva has eighty-seven shlokas and two chapters.

Chapter 872(12): 37 shlokas

Chapter 873(13): 50 shlokas

Bhumi means land or the earth and this section is so named because it has a description of the earth.

CHAPTER 872(12)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! You have described Jambukhandas exactly to me. Now tell me exactly about its expanse and dimensions. O Sanjaya! Without leaving any gaps, also tell me exactly and accurately about the dimensions of the oceans, Shakadvipa, Kushadvipa, Shalmalidvipa and Krounachadvipa. O son of Gavalgana! Tell me everything about Rahu, the moon and the sun.”’

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! There are many dvipas spread throughout the earth. But I will tell you about seven of them and about the moon, the sun and the planet.¹ O lord of the earth! The mountain of Jambu extends, in its entirety, over eighteen thousand and six hundred yojanas. It is said that the salty ocean is double this in expanse. It² has many countries and is decorated with jewels and coral. It is decorated with many beautiful mountains that have diverse kinds of minerals. Inhabited by siddhas and charanas, the ocean is circular. O king! I will tell you exactly about Shakadvipa. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Listen to me, as I describe it to you appropriately. O lord of men! In dimensions, it is double the size

of Jambudvipa. O great king! The ocean is double this in expanse. O foremost among Bharatas! It³ is surrounded on all sides by the milky ocean. There are many sacred countries there. People who are there, do not die. How can there be famine there? They⁴ are endowed with forgiveness and energy. O bull among the Bharata lineage! I have briefly and exactly told you about Shakadvipa. O great king! What else do you desire to hear?”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! You have, briefly and exactly, told me about Shakadvipa. O immensely wise one! Now accurately, tell me everything in detail.”

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! There are seven mountains there and they are adorned with gems. They are stores of jewels. Listen to the names of the rivers that are there. O lord of men! Everything there is supreme in qualities and sacred. The supreme one is known as Meru and is the abode of gods, rishis and gandharvas. O great king! The mountain named Malaya extends towards the east. The clouds are generated there and spread out in all the directions. O Kouravya! Next is the large mountain Jaladhara. Vasava always extracts supreme water from there. O lord of men! It is from this that we obtain showers during the monsoon. The tall mountain of Raivataka is always established there. The grandfather has decreed that Revati nakshatra should be above it in the sky.⁵ O Indra among kings! To the north, is the large mountain named Shyama. O lord of countries! All the people there are dark in complexion.”

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! A great doubt has arisen in my mind now, because of what you have said. O son of a suta! Why are the people there dark in complexion?”

‘Sanjaya said, “O immensely wise one! O descendant of the Kuru lineage! In all the dvipas, there are those who are fair and those who are dark in complexion. O king! There is also a mixture of the two complexions. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But because it is full of such people, it is known as Shyama.⁶ O illustrious one! Because the people there are dark, this mountain is called Shyama. O Indra among

Kouravas! Beyond this, there is the great mountain Durgashaila. Then there is Kesara. The wind that blows there has the fragrance of saffron.⁷ Measured in yojanas, each⁸ is twice the height of the one that has preceded it. O Kouravya! The learned have said that there are seven varshas there. O great king! That of the great Meru is Mahakasha, that of Jalada is Kumudottara, that of Jaladhara is said to be Sukumara, that of Raivata is Koumara, that of Shyama is Manichaka and that of Kesara is Modaki.⁹ Beyond that, is Mahapuman,¹⁰ in the middle of Shakadvipa. O Kouravya! O great king! In length, breadth and circumference, this is as large as the famous and large tree that is in the midst of Jambudvipa. There are many sacred countries there, where Shankara¹¹ is worshipped. The siddhas, the charanas and the gods go there. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the people follow dharma there, and so do the four varnas. They are engaged in their own tasks and no instances of theft can be seen. O great king! They have long lives and are free from old age and death. The people there prosper, like rivers during the monsoon. The rivers there are full of pure water. O Kouravya! O supreme among the Bharata lineage! Ganga divides herself into several flows—Sukumari, Kumari, Sita, Kaveraka, Mahanadi, the river Manijala and Ikshuvardhanika. O extender of the Kuru lineage! There are many other sacred rivers there, in hundreds and thousands, and Vasava draws water from them to shower down. It is impossible to enumerate the names, lengths and dimensions of these. All these rivers are holy. As the worlds know, there are four sacred countries there—Maga, Mashaka, Manasa and Mandaga. O king! Magas are usually brahmanas and are devoted to their own tasks. The kings of Mashaka are devoted to dharma and tend to every desire.¹² O great king! The vaishyas of Manasa earn their living through deeds. With all their desires gratified, they are brave and are firmly devoted to dharma and artha. The shudra men of Mandaga always follow the conduct of dharma. O Indra among kings! There is no king there, no punishment, and no one to be punished. They are devoted to their own dharma and protect dharma

and each other. One is capable of saying this much about that dvipa. Only this much can be heard about the immensely energetic Shakadvipa.”

CHAPTER 873(13)

‘Sanjaya said, “O Kouravya! O great king! I will tell you about what is heard about the dvipa to the north. Listen to me. There is an ocean there, with waters made out of clarified butter.¹³ Beyond that, there is an ocean with waters made of curd.¹⁴ Next is an ocean with waters made out of liquor.¹⁵ And there is another ocean with water made out of sweat.¹⁶ O lord of men! Each of these dvipas is double the size of the one that has preceded it. O great king! They are surrounded by mountains on all sides. In the dvipa that is in the centre, there is a great mountain named Goura, made out of red arsenic. O king! To the west is a mountain named Krishna, which resembles Narayana. Keshava himself protects the divine jewels there. Prajapati is seated there and bestows happiness on beings. Other than the countries, *kusha* grass grows in the midst of Kushadvipa. O king! The *shalmali*¹⁷ tree is worshipped in Shalmalidvipa. There is the mountain of Mahakrouncha in Krounchadvipa. It is a store of gems. O great king! It is always worshipped by the four varnas. O king! There is the extremely large mountain of Gomanta, which is a store of every kind of mineral. The handsome and lotus-eyed lord, Narayana Hari, always resides there, praised by those who have obtained salvation. O Indra among kings! There is another mountain in Kushadvipa and it is marked with coral. There is a second golden and inaccessible mountain named Sudhama. O Kouravya! There is the third radiant mountain, Kumuda. The fourth has the name of Pushpavan and the fifth is Kushoshaya. The sixth has the name of Harigiri and these six are the foremost among mountains. As one progresses, the space between two mountains is double that between the preceding two.

“The first varsha is Oudbhida and the second is Venumandala. The third is Rathakara and the fourth is known as Palana. The fifth varsha is Dhritimat and the sixth varsha is Prabhakara. The seventh varsha is

Kampila and this is the collection of seven varshas. O lord of the universe. Gods, gandharvas and other beings roam and sport there. People do not die there. O king! There are no bandits there and no mleccha tribes. O king! Everyone there is usually fair and delicate. O lord of men! I will tell you about the remaining varshas, as it has been heard. O great king! Listen with an attentive mind. In Krounachadvipa, there is a large mountain named Krouncha. Beyond Krouncha is Vamanaka and after Vamanaka is Andhakaraka. O king! Beyond Andhakaraka¹⁸ is Mainaka, supreme among mountains. O king! Beyond Mainaka is Govinda, best among mountains. O king! Beyond Govinda is the mountain named Nibida. O extender of the lineage! The range between successive mountains is double.¹⁹ Listen. I will tell you about the countries that are located there. The country near Krouncha is Kushala, while that near Vamana²⁰ is Manonuga. O extender of the Kuru lineage! The country beyond Manonuga is Ushna. Pravara is beyond Ushna, Andhakaraka beyond Pravara.²¹ The country beyond Andhakaraka is said to be Munidesha. Dundubhisvana is said to be beyond Munidesha. O lord of men! This is frequented by siddhas and charanas and people are generally fair. O great king! These countries are frequented by gods and gandharvas. There is a mountain named Pushkara in Pushkara and it is full of gems and jewels. The god Prajapati himself, always resides there. O lord of men! All the gods, accompanied by the maharshis, always worship him with eloquent words and reverent homage. Different kinds of jewels from Jambudvipa are used in this. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! In all these dvipas, people and brahmanas observe *brahmacharya*²² and self-control and are truthful. Health and life expectancy progressively becomes double.²³ O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The land in each of these dvipas constitutes a single country. In each of these countries, only a single dharma is seen. The lord Prajapati himself raises his staff of chastisement there. O great king! He always resides in those dvipas and protects them. O king! He is the king. He is the one who provides bliss.²⁴ He is the father. He is the grandfather.

O foremost among men! He protects all the mobile and immobile beings. O Kouravya! O great king! Cooked food manifests itself before the beings there and they always eat it. Beyond this is seen the world named Sama. O great king! This has four corners and thirty-three circles. O Kouravya! O foremost among the Bharata lineage! The four elephants, revered by the worlds, reside there.²⁵ O king! They are Vamana, Airavata, Supratika who has rent temples and mouth, and another one.²⁶ I cannot enumerate the dimensions of these elephants. That has always remained unknown—upwards, downwards and diagonally. O great king! The wind freely blows there from all the directions and the elephants seize it with trunks that are extremely radiant, designed to draw up, and with tips like lotuses. As soon as the elephants have seized the wind, they release it with their breath. O great king! It arrives here and sustains all beings.”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! You have told me in detail about the first.²⁷ You have also described the dvipas. O Sanjaya! Now tell me what is left.”

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! O foremost among the Kouravas! I have spoken about the dvipas. Now listen as I exactly tell you about the planets and Svarbhanu²⁸ and about their dimensions. O great king! It has been heard that the planet Svarbhanu is spherical. Its diameter is twelve thousand yojanas. O unblemished one! Because it is large, its circumference is forty-two thousand yojanas.²⁹ That is what the ancient and learned ones have said. O king! The diameter of the moon is said to be eleven thousand yojanas. O foremost among the Kuru lineage! The circumference of this great-souled one, who provides cool rays, is thirty-eight thousand and nine hundred yojanas.³⁰ O descendant of the Kuru lineage! O king! The diameter of the sun is ten thousand yojanas and its circumference is thirty-five thousand and eight hundred. O unblemished one! This is because it is so large. Thus it has been heard about the extremely benevolent and fast-moving giver of light. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! These are the dimensions indicated for the sun. O great

king! Because of its large size, at the appropriate time, Rahu envelopes both the moon and the sun. I have briefly recounted this to you. O great king! With the sight of the sacred texts, I have told you everything that you had asked, exactly. Be at peace. As instructed there,³¹ I have told you about the creation of the universe. O Kouravya! Therefore, pacify your son Duryodhana.³² O foremost among the Bharata lineage! Having heard the delightful account of Bhumi Parva, a king obtains prosperity and success and is honoured by virtuous ones. The life expectancy, strength, deeds and energy of such a lord of the earth increase, if he follows the vows and listens to it on the day of the new moon or the full moon. His ancestors and grandfathers are gratified. You have now heard everything about the merits that have earlier flowed from Bharata Varsha, where we now are.”

Section Sixty-Three

Bhagavad Gita Parva

This parva has 994 shlokas and twenty-seven chapters.

*Chapter 874(14): 13 shlokas
Chapter 875(15): 75 shlokas
Chapter 876(16): 46 shlokas
Chapter 877(17): 39 shlokas
Chapter 878(18): 18 shlokas
Chapter 879(19): 44 shlokas
Chapter 880(20): 20 shlokas
Chapter 881(21): 17 shlokas
Chapter 882(22): 22 shlokas
Chapter 883(23): 47 shlokas
Chapter 884(24): 72 shlokas
Chapter 885(25): 43 shlokas
Chapter 886(26): 42 shlokas
Chapter 887(27): 29 shlokas
Chapter 888(28): 47 shlokas
Chapter 889(29): 30 shlokas
Chapter 890(30): 28 shlokas
Chapter 891(31): 34 shlokas
Chapter 892(32): 42 shlokas
Chapter 893(33): 55 shlokas
Chapter 894(34): 20 shlokas
Chapter 895(35): 34 shlokas
Chapter 896(36): 27 shlokas
Chapter 897(37): 20 shlokas
Chapter 898(38): 24 shlokas
Chapter 899(39): 28 shlokas
Chapter 900(40): 78 shlokas*

This section is so named because it includes the Song Celestial or the Bhagavad Gita, the teachings of Krishna to Arjuna. The section begins with the dramatic news that Bhishma has been killed. When Sanjaya tells Dhritarashtra this, Dhritarashtra (and

the reader) is astounded, wishing to know how this came to be. After a description of the arrangements for war, the rest of this section is the Bhagavad Gita.

CHAPTER 874(14)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Sanjaya, Gavaigana’s son, was wise. He could see everything, the past, the present and the future. In great distress, he suddenly rushed from the field of battle to where Dhritarashtra was immersed in thought and told him that Bhishma, the intermediate one of the Bharata lineage, had been killed. ¹ “O bull among the Bharata lineage! I am Sanjaya and I bow down before you. Shantanu’s son, Bhishma, the grandfather of the Bharatas, has been slain. He was foremost among all warriors. He was the resort of all archers. That grandfather of the Kurus is now lying down on a bed of arrows. Depending on his valour, your son embarked on that game of dice. O king! That Bhishma is now lying down, having been killed on the field of battle by Shikhandi. On a single chariot, that maharatha had earlier defeated all the lords of the earth in a great battle in Kashi. ² Descended from the Vasus, he fought with Rama, Jamadagni’s son, in a battle. Jamadagni’s son could not kill him. But he has now been slain by Shikhandi. He was like the great Indra in his valour and like the Himalayas in his steadfastness. He was like the ocean in his gravity and like the earth in his patience. Arrows were like his teeth. The bow was his mouth. The sword was his tongue. He was invincible. He was a lion among men. Today, your father ³ has been brought down by the one from Panchala. ⁴ On seeing him ready for battle, the large army of the Pandavas trembled in fear, like a herd of cattle on seeing a lion. He protected your army and formations for ten nights. He performed extremely difficult deeds and has now departed, like the setting sun. Like Shakra, ⁵ he calmly showered thousands of arrows. For ten days, every day, he killed ten thousand warriors in battle. Like a tree struck by the wind, he has been killed and is lying down on the ground. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He did not deserve this and this is because of your evil counsel.”’

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “How has Bhishma, bull among the Kurus, been killed by Shikhandi? My father was the equal of Vasava. How has he been brought down from his chariot? O Sanjaya! What happened to my sons when they were deprived of Bhishma? He was powerful and was like the gods. He observed brahmacharya for the sake of his superior. ⁶ He was great in spirit and great in strength, a great archer. When that maharatha, a tiger among men, was killed, what was the state of their ⁷ minds then? My mind is pierced with great grief on hearing that he has been killed. He was a bull among the Kuru lineage. He was a brave one who did not waver. He was a bull among men. When he advanced, who followed him? Who were the ones who preceded him? O Sanjaya! Who was at his side and who advanced with him? He was a bull among kshatriyas who could not be dislodged. Which brave ones were with that bull among rathas when he suddenly penetrated the formation of chariots? Who were at the rear? ⁸ That destroyer of enemies, who was like the sun and an equal of the one with the thousand rays, suddenly attacked the enemy soldiers and spread terror amidst the enemy. On the instructions of Kourava, ⁹ he performed difficult deeds in battle. He devoured their ranks. Who tried to repulse him? O Sanjaya! He was accomplished and unassailable. When Shantanu’s son advanced against them in battle, how did the Pandavas counter him? He slaughtered the soldiers. He possessed arrows for his teeth. He was swift. The bow was his gaping mouth. The terrible sword was his tongue. He was invincible. He was the ultimate of tigers among men. He was modest. He had never been vanquished. How could Kounteya bring down such an unvanquished one in battle? He was a terrible and fierce archer. He was stationed on his supreme chariot. With his sharp arrows, he sliced off the heads of enemies. On seeing him ready in battle, like the invincible fire of destruction, the great army of the Pandavas always trembled. That destroyer of troops destroyed the soldiers for ten nights. After having accomplished extremely difficult deeds, he has now departed like the setting sun. Like Shakra, he created a shower of inexhaustible arrows. In

ten days, he slaughtered a hundred million warriors in battle. He is lying down on the bare ground, like a tree destroyed by the wind. This is because of my evil counsel. That descendant of the Bharata lineage did not deserve this. On witnessing the terrible valour of Bhishma, Shantanu's son, how was the army of the Pandavas capable of striking him down? How did the sons of Pandu engage with Bhishma in battle? O Sanjaya! While Drona was still alive, how could Bhishma not be victorious? When Kripa was near him, and so was Bharadvaja's son, ¹⁰ how could Bhishma, supreme among warriors, be killed? Bhishma was an *atiratha*. ¹¹ Even the gods were incapable of withstanding him. How could Shikhandi of Panchala kill him in battle? He always rivalled Jamadagni's extremely powerful son ¹² in battle. Jamadagni's son, who was Shakra's equal in valour, could not defeat him. How could Bhishma, with the strength of a maharatha, be killed in battle? O Sanjaya! Without knowing about that brave one, I cannot obtain any peace. O Sanjaya! Which of my great archers did not desert that undecaying one? On Duryodhana's instructions, which brave ones surrounded him? When all the Pandavas advanced against the undecaying Bhishma, with Shikhandi at the forefront, were the Kurus frightened? Did they abandon him? The roar of his bow, with its shower of arrows, was like a giant cloud. The great twang of his bow was like a tall and mighty cloud. He showered arrows on the Kounteyas, together with the Panchalas and the Srinjayas. He slaughtered the brave warriors of the enemy, like the wielder of the vajra against the danavas.

“He was like a terrible and surging ocean, with his invincible arrows like crocodiles. The bows were like waves. That interminable ocean was without boats and without islands. The clubs and swords were like whirling sharks. ¹³ The masses of horses and elephants were like crocodiles. There were many spirited horses, elephants, infantry and chariots. All those warriors of the enemy were immersed in that battle. Through his energy and anger, that scorcher of enemies consumed them. Which brave one could repulse him, like the shore against the abode of sharks? ¹⁴ O Sanjaya! For Duryodhana's sake, Bhishma, the destroyer of

enemies, performed deeds in battle. Who were in front of him then? Bhishma was infinitely energetic. Who protected his right axle? With devotion and care, who guarded him at the back from enemy warriors? So as to protect him, who were immediately in front of Bhishma? When that brave one fought in battle, which brave ones protected his front axle? O Sanjaya! Who were stationed at his left axle and attacked the Srinjayas? Who protected his unassailable advance guard? Who protected his sides? He has traversed along the difficult path. ¹⁵ O Sanjaya! Who were the ones who fought with the enemy warriors in general? If our brave ones protected him and were protected by him, how did he not swiftly vanquish that invincible army ¹⁶ in battle? He was like the lord of all the worlds, the supreme god Prajapati. O Sanjaya! How were the Pandavas capable of striking him? He was our refuge and the Kurus resorted to him when fighting with the enemy. O Sanjaya! You have told me that Bhishma, tiger among men, has fallen. My son resorted to the great strength of that valiant one and ignored the Pandavas. How could he have been slain by the enemy? My father was great in his vows. He was unassailable in battle. In earlier times, desiring to slay the danavas, all the gods sought his help. When he was born, the immensely valiant Shantanu, the protector of the world, gave up sorrow, grief and dejection. He possessed the qualities of a son. He was wise. He was devoted. He was a refuge. He was devoted to his own dharma. He was pure. He knew the truth about the Vedas and the *Vedangas*. ¹⁷ How could he have been killed? He was skilled in all weapons. He was modest. He was self-controlled. He was calm. He was spirited. On hearing that Shantanu's son has been killed, I think that the rest of my army has already been slain. It is my view that adharma has become stronger than dharma. The Pandavas desire the kingdom and have killed their aged senior. Jamadagni's son, Rama, is supreme among those who know all weapons. In earlier times, when he raised his weapons for the sake of Amba, he was defeated by Bhishma in battle. ¹⁸ He was the equal of Indra in deeds. He was foremost among all archers. You have said that Bhishma has been killed. What can be a greater misery than this?

Jamadagni's valiant son, Rama, the destroyer of enemy warriors, who made it a vow to kill kshatriyas, could not defeat him in battle. That extremely intelligent one has now been killed by Shikhandi. It is thus evident that Drupada's son, Shikhandi, is superior in energy, valour and strength to the immensely valorous Bhargava, ¹⁹ invincible in battle. That brave one ²⁰ was accomplished in battle. He was skilled in the use of all weapons. He was knowledgeable about supreme weapons. That bull among the Bharata lineage has been killed. In that assembly of enemies, who were the brave ones who followed that destroyer of foes? Tell me how the battle between Bhishma and the Pandavas proceeded.

“O Sanjaya! With that brave one killed, my army is like a woman without a son. My soldiers are like a demented herd of cattle, without a protector. In a great battle, his manliness was supreme in the worlds. When he fell, what was the state of my army then? O Sanjaya! Despite being alive, what strength remains in us now? We have caused our greatly valorous father to be killed, chief among virtuous ones in the world. We are immersed in fathomless water, without seeing a boat that we can use to cross. I think that my sons must be grief-stricken, extremely miserable at Bhishma's death. My heart must be made out of extremely hard stone. On hearing about the death of Bhishma, tiger among men, it is not being rent asunder. He was a bull among the Bharata lineage and possessed weapons, intelligence and policy. He was immeasurable and unassailable. How was he killed in battle? One cannot be freed from death through weapons, valour, austerities, intelligence, steadfastness or giving up. Destiny is extremely powerful and cannot be transgressed by anyone in the world. O Sanjaya! You have told me that Bhishma, Shantanu's son, has been killed. Tormented by grief on account of my sons, I thought of the great misery and sought salvation from Shantanu's son, Bhishma. O Sanjaya! When he saw Shantanu's son lying down on the ground like a sun, to whom did Duryodhana resort? O Sanjaya! When I reflect with my intelligence on the lords of the earth who are on my side and those of the enemy, I do not see what remnants will be left in either army. The dharma of kshatriyas, as

instructed by the rishis, is terrible, since, desiring the kingdom, the Pandavas have killed Shantanu's son. We also desired the kingdom and have killed our grandfather. The Parthas, and my sons, are established in the dharma of kshatriyas and no crime attaches to them. O Sanjaya! When there is a great calamity, even a virtuous person should perform this task. One should exhibit ultimate valour, to the best of one's capacity. This has been laid down. He was modest and unvanquished. O son! ²¹ When he was engaged in slaughtering soldiers, how did the sons of Pandu counter Shantanu's son? How were the soldiers arrayed and how did he fight with the great-souled ones?

“O Sanjaya! How was my father, Bhishma, killed by the enemies? When Bhishma was killed, what did Duryodhana, Karna, Shakuni Soubala and Duhshasana say? This gambling board is strewn with the bodies of men, elephants and horses. There are terrible arrows, lances, clubs, swords and spikes as dice. Those evil ones have entered the assembly hall of this difficult war. Those bulls among men are gambling and have offered their lives as stakes. Who was won? Who won? O Sanjaya! Who was successful in his objective? Other than Bhishma, Shantanu's son, who else has been brought down? Tell me. After hearing that Devavrata ²² has been slain, I cannot obtain peace. My father ²³ was the performer of terrible deeds. On hearing this, I am grief-stricken. Thinking about the great injury that will befall my sons, my heart was anguished. O Sanjaya! You have made that fire blaze, by sprinkling clarified butter on it. On seeing that Bhishma, famous in all the worlds, and the one who had accepted a great burden, has been slain, I think that my sons must be grieving. I wish to hear about the misery that has arisen from Duryodhana's deeds. O Sanjaya! Therefore, tell me everything exactly as it has happened in that war that will destroy the earth, brought about by the evil intelligence of my son. O Sanjaya! Tell me everything, whether it is good or bad. In his desire for victory, what did Bhishma finally accomplish in the battle? He possessed energy. He was skilled in weapons. How was the battle between the soldiers of the Kurus

and the Pandavas? Tell me exactly, in due order, with the time of occurrence.””

CHAPTER 876(16)

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! You are a worthy person and the question that you have asked is fitting. However, you should not ascribe the fault to Duryodhana. One who suffers because of his own evil conduct, should not blame other men. This is not right and you should not do this. O great king! A man who is reprehensible in all his conduct deserves to be killed by everyone because of those censurable deeds. The Pandavas are not wise about deceitful ways. They waited, with their followers and advisers. They looked towards you and bore it. They forgave and dwelt for a long time in the forest. O lord of the earth! Hear about this gathering of horses, elephants and infinitely energetic kings, which I have seen through sight obtained through the strength of yoga. Do not sorrow in your mind. O lord of men! All this has been preordained earlier. I bow down before your father, Parashara’s wise son. ²⁴ Through his favours, I have obtained divine and supreme wisdom. O king! I have sight beyond the senses and can hear from a great distance. I know the minds of others and am acquainted with the past and the future. I always know about rising and travelling through the sky. The great-souled one has granted me the boon of not being touched by weapons in battle. Listen in detail to the wonderful and extraordinary account. The great battle between the Bharatas makes the body hair stand up.

““O great king! When the soldiers were arrayed in accordance with the prescribed battle formations, Duryodhana spoke to Duhshasana. ‘O Duhshasana! Let the chariots be yoked immediately for Bhishma’s protection. Instruct all our soldiers to advance swiftly. What I have thought about for many years, has now come to pass. With their soldiers, the Pandavas and the Kurus have met. I do not think that there is anything in this battle more important than Bhishma’s protection. If he is protected, he will kill the Parthas and the Somakas, together with the Srinjayas. That

pure-souled one has said, “I will not kill Shikhandi. I have heard that he was a woman earlier. Therefore, I will avoid him in battle.” It is my view that because of this, Bhishma must be specially protected. Let all my soldiers station themselves, resolving to kill Shikhandi. Let all the soldiers from the east and the west, the south and the north, skilled in weapons, protect the grandfather. If unprotected, an extremely strong lion can be killed by a wolf. Let a lion not be killed by the jackal Shikhandi.

Yudhamanyu protects Phalguna’s ²⁵ left and Uttamouja protects the right. Phalguna protects Shikhandi. Partha protects the one whom Bhishma will avoid. O Duhshasana! Act so that Gangeya is not slain.’

“When night had passed, a great roar arose from all the lords of the earth. ‘Yoke! Yoke!’ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The sound of conch shells and drums was like the roar of lions. There was the neighing of horses and the clatter of the wheels of chariots. Elephants trumpeted. Warriors roared. They slapped their arms and there was a tumultuous sound everywhere. O great king! When the sun arose, all the soldiers in the large armies of the Kurus and the Pandavas arose and completed all the arrangements. O Indra among kings! Your sons and the Pandavas possessed elephants and chariots decorated with gold. They could be seen in their radiance, like clouds streaked with lightning. An array of many chariots could be seen, like cities. Your father was extremely resplendent, like the full moon. The warriors were stationed in their battle formations, with bows, scimitars, swords, ²⁶ clubs, javelins, spears and other shining weapons. O lord of the earth! There were elephants, chariots, infantry and horses. There were hundreds and thousands of them, spread like a net. Resplendent standards of many different kinds could be seen. They were brilliant and there were thousands of them, belonging to us and to the enemy. They were golden and were adorned with jewels. They blazed like the fire. The kings possessed thousands of radiant standards. They shone like the great Indra’s standard and resembled the great Indra’s abode. The brave ones who desired to fight, glanced at them. Indras among men were at the forefront of their troops. Their weapons were raised. They had

colourful guards on their palms and possessed quivers. Their eyes were like those of bulls. Shakuni Soubala, Shalya, Jayadratha from Sindhu, Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti, Sudakshina from Kamboja, Shrutayudha from Kalinga, King Jayatsena, Brihadbala from Koshala and Satvata Kritavarma—these ten tigers among men were brave and possessed arms like clubs. They were performers of sacrifices at which a lot of gifts were donated. Each of them headed one *akshouhini*.²⁷ Other than this, there were many others who followed Duryodhana. There were immensely strong kings and princes, knowledgeable about policy. They could be seen armoured, heading their armies. All of them were attired in black deerskin. They had standards and wore garlands of *munja* grass.²⁸ They prepared themselves for Duryodhana's sake and were ready to go to Brahma's world.²⁹ They stationed themselves, heading the ten large armies. The eleventh large army of Kourava, Dhritarashtra's son, stood in front of all the soldiers, with Shantanu's son at the head. The undecaying one was in a white headdress. He had white horses and was clad in white armour. O great king! Bhishma could be seen like the rising moon. Stationed on his silver chariot, Bhishma had a standard with a golden palm tree. He could be seen by the Kurus and the Pandavas like the one with the sharp rays,³⁰ enveloped by white clouds. Dhrishtadyumna, the great Srinjaya archer, was at the forefront³¹ and they looked like small animals, glancing at a large and yawning lion. With Dhrishtadyumna at the forefront, all of them trembled repeatedly. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! These are the eleven large divisions of your army. The seven divisions of the Pandavas were also protected by great men. They were like two oceans meeting at the end of an era, infested with crazy sharks³² and giant crocodiles. O king! We have not seen or heard of anything like this earlier, like those armies encountering each other in the prescribed manner.”

‘Sanjaya said, “Just as the illustrious Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa had said, in that fashion, all the lords of the earth assembled for the encounter. On that day, the moon approached Magha. ³³ The seven large and blazing planets ³⁴ appeared in the sky. When the sun arose, it seemed to be divided into two parts. When the blazing sun arose in the sky, it had a flaming crest. The directions blazed. Desiring to feed on bodies, flesh and blood, jackals and crows cried out. Each day, the aged grandfather of the Kurus and Bharadvaja’s son arose and with concentration, wished that the Parthas might not be killed and that the sons of Pandu might be victorious. Those undecaying scorchers of enemies fought for your sake only because they had taken a pledge. Your father, Devavrata, was knowledgeable about every aspect of dharma. He summoned all the lords of the earth and spoke these words to them. ‘O kshatriyas! This great door that leads to heaven has been opened up. Pass through it and go the worlds of Shakra and Brahma. ³⁵ This is the eternal path, indicated by the ancient ones, and those who have preceded them. Honour yourselves by fighting with great attention. Through such deeds, Nabhaga, Yayati, Mandhata, Nahusha and Nriga have been successful and have reached the supreme goal. It is adharma for a kshatriya to die from disease in his home. The eternal dharma is to die in the field of battle.’ O bull among the Bharata lineage! Having been thus addressed by Bhishma, all the lords of the earth went to the heads of their armies and were resplendent in their supreme chariots. O bull among the Bharata lineage! But because of Bhishma, Vaikartana Karna, together with his advisers and relatives, cast aside his weapons in that battle. Without Karna, your sons and all the kings on your side marched out. They roared like lions and this resounded in the ten directions. There were white umbrellas and flags and pennants, elephants and horses. With charioteers, chariots and infantry, the army was splendid. There was the sound of drums and cymbals and also the noise of kettledrums. The earth trembled because of the roar of the wheels of chariots. The maharathas had golden armlets and bracelets and bows. They were as radiant as mobile mountains.

“Bhishma’s standard had a large palm tree with five stars. The general of the Kuru army was like the clear sun. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O king! As instructed by Shantanu’s son, all the kings and great archers who were on your side stationed themselves. With all the kings, Shaibya Govasana ³⁶ advanced on a king among elephants that was bedecked with flags and deserved to carry kings. Ashvatthama, whose complexion was like the lotus, was at the head of all the soldiers. He was ready and his standard was adorned with a lion’s tail. Shrutayudha, Chitrasena, Purumitra, Vivimshati, Shalya, Bhurishrava, maharatha Vikarna—these seven great archers were adorned in excellent armour. They rode their chariots and followed Drona’s son, ahead of Bhishma. Their great standards were resplendent on their supreme chariots. The golden flags were seen to be blazing. Drona, foremost among preceptors, had a golden altar on his standard, adorned with a water pot and the sign of a bow. Duryodhana’s large standard had a bejewelled elephant and led hundreds and thousands of soldiers. Pourava, Kalinga, Sudakshina from Kamboja, Kshemadhanva, Sumitra and other rathas were in front of him. ³⁷ The king of Magadha guided the forces from the front, on an extremely expensive chariot that bore the standard of a bull. He was protected by the lord of Anga ³⁸ and the great-souled Kripa. That extremely large army from the east looked like scattered autumn clouds. The immensely famous Jayadratha stationed himself at the forefront of the soldiers. ³⁹ He had a beautiful silver standard, marked with the sign of a boar. A hundred thousand chariots, eight thousand elephants and sixty thousand horses were under his command. O king! Commanded by the lord of Sindhu, foremost among standard bearers, that large army was resplendent with chariots, elephants and horses. Together with Ketumat, the lord of all the Kalingas advanced with sixty thousand chariots and ten thousand elephants. His large elephants were like mountains. They were adorned with implements of war, ⁴⁰ spears, quivers and standards and were beautiful. Kalinga was resplendent with a standard that bore the sign of a tree. He had a white umbrella and golden whisks. O king! Ketumat was

also on an elephant, with a colourful and supreme goad. ⁴¹ He was stationed in that battle, like the sun amidst clouds. King Bhagadatta was stationed on a supreme elephant and was radiant in his energy. He was like the wielder of the vajra. Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti were regarded as Bhagadatta's equal. They rode on the shoulders of elephants and followed Ketumat. O king! Instructed by Drona, the king who was Shantanu's son, the son of the preceptor, ⁴² Bahlika and Kripa, the arrays of chariots were arranged in *vyuhas* ⁴³ with excellent heads. The elephants were the body. The horses were the sides. That fierce formation was ready to descend and attack on all sides.”

CHAPTER 878(18)

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! After some time, a tumultuous sound could be heard, when the warriors prepared to fight, and it made the heart tremble. There were the sounds of conch shells and drums. Elephants trumpeted. The wheels of the chariots thundered and the earth seemed to be torn apart. The horses neighed. The warriors roared. O unassailable one! The armies of your sons and those of the Pandavas encountered each other and trembled. The elephants and the chariots were decorated with gold and were seen to be radiant, like clouds with lightning. O lord of men! Those on your side had many different kinds of standards. They were adorned with golden rings and shone like the fire. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Those on your side ⁴⁴ and those on the side of the enemy were seen to be as pure as the great Indra's standard, in the great Indra's abode. The brave ones were clad in golden armour. They blazed like the fiery sun. Armoured, they seemed to be like the blazing planets. They held upraised weapons and wore guards on their palms. They possessed standards. They had eyes like bulls. They were great archers and placed themselves at the forefront. O lord of men! Among your sons, there were those who protected Bhishma from the rear—Duhshasana, Durvisaha, Durmukha, Duhsaha, Vivimshati, Chitrasena and maharatha Vikarna. There were also Satyavrata, Purumitra, Jaya, Bhurishrava and Shala. They

were followed by twenty thousand chariots. Abhishaha, Shurasena, Shibi, Vasati, Shalva, Matysa, Ambashtha, Trigarta, Kekaya, Souvira, Kitava and those from the east, west and the north Malava—all the brave ones from these twelve regions ⁴⁵ advanced, ready to give up their lives. They protected the grandfather with an array of large chariots. With an army that consisted of ten thousand swift elephants, the king of Magadha followed that array of chariots. Those who protected the wheels of chariots and the feet of the elephants in the midst of that army numbered six million. The infantry marched in advance, with bows, shields and swords in their hands. There were many hundreds and thousands of them and they fought with nails and lances. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O great king! The eleven akshouhinis of your sons looked like the Ganga separated from the Yamuna.””

CHAPTER 879(19)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “On seeing the eleven akshouhinis arranged in battle formation, how did Pandava Yudhishtira, possessing fewer soldiers, arrange his counter-formations? Bhishma knew about all vyuhas—those of men, gods, gandharvas and asuras. How did Kounteya Pandava counter them?”

‘Sanjaya said, “On seeing the soldiers of Dhritarashtra’s sons arranged in battle formation, Dharmaraja Pandava, with dharma in his soul, spoke to Dhananjaya. ‘O son! ⁴⁶ We know from the words of maharshi Brihaspati that a small number of soldiers must be arranged in condensed form, while a larger number can be extended at will. When a small number has to fight with a larger one, the arrangement should be *suchimukha*. ⁴⁷ Compared to those of the enemy, our soldiers are few. O Pandava! Following the words and instructions of the maharshi, arrange the vyuha.’ On hearing the words of Dharmaraja, Phalguna replied, ‘O king! I will arrange a vyuha that is extremely invincible. This immovable vyuha is known by the name of Vajra and has been designed by the wielder of the vajra. Bhima is supreme among wielders of weapons. He is like a turbulent

storm. No enemy can withstand him in battle. He will fight at the forefront. That supreme of men will pacify the energy of the enemy's soldiers. He is skilled in all the techniques used in war. He will lead us and fight from the front. On seeing him, all the kings, with Duryodhana at the forefront, will be confused and will retreat, like small animals at the sight of a lion. With him as a wall, all of us will resort to him, like all the immortals resort to the wielder of the vajra, and our fear will be dispelled. Bhima is foremost among the wielders of weapons. Vrikodara is a bull among men and is the performer of terrible deeds. Especially when he is enraged, there is no man in the world who can glance at him. Bhimasena wields a firm club, with substance like the vajra. When he roams around with great force, he can dry up the ocean. O lord of men! Kekaya, Dhrishtaketu and the valiant Chekitana—these advisers also look towards him. So do Dhritarashtra's sons.' This is what Bibhatsu said. O venerable one! When Partha spoke in this way, all the soldiers applauded the eloquent one in that field of battle. Having spoken in this way, the mighty-armed Dhananjaya did what he had said. Phalguna arranged the forces in the form of the vyuha and advanced.

“On seeing the advancing army of the Kurus, the mighty army of the Pandavas seemed to be like the overflowing, surging and moving Ganga. Bhimasena, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, Nakula, Sahadeva and valiant Dhrishtaketu were in the vanguard. Surrounded by one akshouhini, the king ⁴⁸ was at the rear, protecting them from the back with his brothers and sons. Madri's immensely radiant sons protected Bhima's wheels. The swift sons of Droupadi and Subhadra protected the rear. They were protected from the rear by maharatha Dhrishtadyumna of Panchala, together with the brave Prabhadrakas, foremost among rathas. Shikhandi was behind them, protected by Arjuna. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He ⁴⁹ advanced, determined to bring about Bhishma's destruction.

Maharatha Yuyudhana ⁵⁰ guarded Arjuna's rear and the two from Panchala, Yudhamanyu and Uttamouja, guarded his wheels. Kunti's son, King Yudhishtira, was in the centre of the army, surrounded by large and

crazy elephants that were like moving mountains. For the sake of the Pandavas, the valorous Panchala Yajnasena ⁵¹ placed himself behind Virata, with one akshouhini. O king! The chariots and great standards bore many signs. They were adorned with the best of gold and looked like the sun and the moon. Asking them to advance, maharatha Dhrishtadyumna, together with his brothers and sons, protected Yudhishtira from the rear. Surpassing all the chariots and many standards on your side and those of the enemy, a giant ape was stationed on Arjuna's standard. Many hundreds and thousands of infantry advanced in front, protecting Bhimasena. They had swords, lances and scimitars in their hands. There were ten thousand elephants, with musth trickling from their temples and mouths. They were brave and were adorned with glittering nets of gold. They were like moving mountains. They flowed like clouds. ⁵² They were like mad mountains. They possessed the fragrance of lotuses. They followed the king at the rear, like moving mountains. Bhimasena whirled his terrible club, which was like a *parigha*. ⁵³ The invincible and great-minded one was capable of crushing a large army. He was incapable of being looked at, like the sun, and was scorching, like the one with the rays. From a close distance, none of the warriors was capable of looking at him. The vyuha named Vajra was difficult to penetrate and faced every direction. ⁵⁴ The bows were like streaks of lightning ⁵⁵ and this terrible formation was protected by the wielder of the Gandiva. Arranging the army in this counter formation, the Pandavas waited. Protected by the Pandavas, it was invincible in the world of men.

“At dawn, both sets of soldiers waited for the sun to rise. A wind, with drops of water, began to blow. Though there were no clouds, thunder could be heard. Dry winds began to blow from all directions and carried sharp stones from the ground below. Dust arose and covered the earth in darkness. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Large meteors fell down in an eastern direction. They struck the rising sun and were shattered, with a loud noise. O bull among the Bharata lineage! When the armies were arranged in this way, the sun lost its luminescence and the earth roared and

trembled. O supreme among the Bharata lineage! The roar of thunder was repeatedly heard from all the directions. O king! A thick dust arose and nothing could be seen. The giant standards, adorned with nets of bells, golden ornaments and flags, and like the sun in their resplendence, were suddenly struck by the wind. All of them made a jingling sound, like a forest of palm trees. Thus those Pandavas, tigers among men, were stationed, delighted at the prospect of battle. They were in a counter-formation against the army of your sons. O bull among the Bharata lineage! They seemed to suck the marrow out from the warriors. ⁵⁶ Bhimasena could be seen at the forefront, with a club in his hand.”

CHAPTER 880(20)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! My army, with Bhishma as the leader, and that of the Pandavas, with Bhima as the leader, desired to fight. When the sun arose, which of these was cheerful when it approached the other? To which side were the moon, the sun and the wind adverse? Against which army did predators utter inauspicious sounds? Which were the young ones who had cheerful complexions on their faces? Tell me all this, exactly and in detail.”

‘Sanjaya said, “O Indra among kings! When the two armies were equally arranged in vyuhas, they were equally cheerful. They were equally beautiful, as resplendent as forests. They were full of elephants, chariots and horses. Both the armies were large and terrible in form. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Each one was incapable of withstanding the other. It was as if both had been created for conquering heaven. Both were protected by virtuous men. Dhritarashtra’s sons, the Kurus, faced the west. The Parthas were stationed facing the east, ready to fight. The Kouravas were like the army of the Indra of the daityas, the Pandavas were like the army of the Indra of the gods. The wind blew from behind the Pandavas. The predators howled from behind the sons of Dhritarashtra. The elephants of your son could not bear the sharp smell from the musth of those Indras among elephants. ⁵⁷ Duryodhana was on an elephant with the complexion

of a lotus. It was armoured and had rent temples. It possessed a golden girdle. He was stationed in the midst of the Kurus and the bards and the minstrels praised him. A white umbrella with a golden chain, as brilliant as the moon, was held aloft his head. Shakuni, the king of Gandhara, followed him, surrounded in every direction by mountainous people from the region of Gandhara. The aged Bhishma was in front of all the soldiers. He had a white umbrella, a white bow, a conch shell, a white headdress, a white flag and white horses, and looked like a white mountain. All the sons of Dhritarashtra were in his army and also Shala, who came from the country named Bahlika. The kshatriyas from Ambashtha, those from Sindhu and Souvira and the brave ones from the land of the five rivers ⁵⁸ were also there.

“The great-souled Drona was on a golden chariot with red horses. He was mighty-armed and his spirit never waned. He was the preceptor of almost all the kings. He was like an Indra on earth, protecting from the rear. Vardhakshatri, Bhurishrava, Purumitra, Jaya, Shalva, Matsya and all the Kekayas, with their brothers, were in the midst of all the soldiers. They possessed an army of elephants and wished to fight. Sharadvat’s great-souled son ⁵⁹ always fought in the front. He was the great archer Goutama, wonderful in fighting. With Shakas, Kiratas, ⁶⁰ Yavanas ⁶¹ and Pahlavas, he stationed himself in the forefront of the army. That large army was protected by maharathas from Andhaka, Vrishni and Bhoja and also those from Sourashtra and the south-west, skilled in the use of weapons. There was also Kritavarma, who advanced behind your army. There were ten thousand *samshaptaka* rathas, ⁶² who had been created for death or for triumphing over Arjuna. O king! They were skilled in the use of weapons. They advanced with the brave Trigartas, resolved to follow Arjuna at every step. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were ten thousand fierce elephants on your side. A hundred chariots were assigned to each elephant, a hundred horses were assigned to each chariot, ten archers were assigned to each horse and ten shield-bearers were assigned to each archer. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus did Bhishma

arrange your troops in battle formation. From one day to another, Bhishma, the general and Shantanu's son, arranged it in human vyuhas, or vyuhas of gods, gandharvas and asuras. With a large number of maharathas, it was like the ocean on the night of the full moon. Arranged in a vyuha by Bhishma, the army of Dhritarashtra's son was stationed facing the west, ready to fight. O Indra among kings! Your side was innumerable with standards. It was terrible. But though it was not like yours, ⁶³ it seemed to me that the one of the Pandavas was larger and invincible, with leaders like Keshava and Arjuna.”

CHAPTER 881(21)

‘Sanjaya said, “On seeing the large army of Dhritarashtra's sons, ready to fight, Kunti's son, King Yudhishtira, was overcome by grief. Pandava saw the impenetrable vyuha that Bhishma had crafted. Having seen that it was impenetrable, he was distressed and spoke to Arjuna. ‘O Dhananjaya! O mighty-armed one! When the grandfather fights on the side of the sons of Dhritarashtra, how will we be able to fight with them in this battle? Bhishma, the destroyer of enemies, whose energy is manifold, has crafted this immovable and impenetrable formation, in accordance with the decrees of the sacred texts. O destroyer of enemies! Together with our soldiers, we now have doubts. How can we be successful against this great vyuha?’ O king! Thus addressed by Partha Yudhishtira, the destroyer of enemies, who was overcome by grief at the sight of your army, Arjuna replied, ‘O lord of the earth! Listen. Those who are few can vanquish many brave ones who are superior in wisdom and possess qualities. O king! You do not suffer from malice and I will tell you the means. O Pandava! The rishi Narada, and Bhishma and Drona, know this. On an earlier occasion, at the time of the battle between the gods and the asuras, the grandfather himself said this to the great Indra and the denizens of heaven. “Those who desire victory, do not triumph through strength and valour, but through truth, non-violence, devotion to dharma and endeavour. One must give up adharma, avarice and delusion and resort to endeavour.

One must fight without pride. Where there is dharma, there will be victory.” O king! Know that it is for this reason that our victory in this battle is certain. Narada has said that where there is Krishna, victory is there. Victory is Krishna’s quality, it follows Madhava. Victory is one of his qualities and humility is another. Govinda is infinite in his energy. He is without pain even amidst a multitude of enemies. He is the eternal being. Where there is Krishna, victory is there. In earlier times, Hari manifested himself. He is Vaikuntha. ⁶⁴ He has no weakness before weapons. In a loud tone, he spoke to the gods and the asuras, “Who among you wishes for victory?” The vanquished ones ⁶⁵ replied, “We will follow Krishna and thereby obtain victory.” Through his favours, Shakra and the other gods obtained the three worlds. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Therefore, I do not see any reason for despondency. You have the lord of the universe and the lord of the thirty gods and because of this, you are assured of victory.’”

CHAPTER 882(22)

‘Sanjaya said, “O bull among the Bharata lineage! Then King Yudhishtira arranged his soldiers in a counter-formation against Bhishma’s and said, ‘O extenders of the Kuru lineage! The Pandavas are arrayed in a counter-formation, in accordance with the injunctions. Desiring to attain supreme heaven, fight well.’ Protected by Savyasachi, Shikhandi stood in the middle of the army. Protected by Bhima, Dhrishtadyumna was in the front. O king! The southern segment was protected by the handsome Yuyudhana, ⁶⁶ foremost archer among the Satvatas and Shakra’s equal. Yudhishtira was on a chariot that was like the great Indra’s vehicle. It bore an excellent standard with gold and jewels and had a golden harness. He was stationed in the midst of his array of elephants. An extremely white and beautiful umbrella, with a handle made of tusks, was held aloft his head. Maharshis circumambulated him and sung his praises. Priests, maharshis and aged ones chanted his praises so that his enemies would be destroyed. They used meditation, mantras and herbs and pronounced words of benediction.

The supreme among Kurus gave the great-souled brahmanas garments, cows, fruits, flowers and gold. He advanced like Shakra of the immortals. Arjuna's chariot possessed one hundred bells. It was embellished with the best of gold and was as resplendent as the fire, blazing like a thousand suns. It was yoked to white steeds and possessed excellent wheels. It had an ape on its banner. It was driven by Keshava and he ⁶⁷ was stationed on it, with the Gandiva and arrows in his hands. There was no archer who was equal to him on earth. Nor will there ever be such a one. Bhimasena assumes a terrible form for the destruction of your sons. Without any weapons and with his bare hands, in a battle, he can reduce to ashes men, horses and elephants. The twins were with Vrikodara and they protected the brave charioteers. In this world, he ⁶⁸ is like the great Indra himself. He was like an angry lion that was playing. Vrikodara was as insolent as a king of elephants. On seeing him in the vanguard of the army, the spirit of your soldiers was overcome by fear and anxiety and they trembled, like elephants caught in the mud.

“O foremost among the Bharata lineage! Janardana then spoke to Gudakesha, ⁶⁹ the invincible prince who was stationed in the midst of the army. Vasudeva said, ‘Bhishma will attack our soldiers like a lion. He will protect with his power and strength. He is the flag of the Kuru lineage. That performer of three hundred horse sacrifices is there. Other soldiers surround the illustrious one, like clouds enveloping the one with the virtuous rays. O foremost among brave ones! Slay those troops, wishing to fight with the bull among the Bharata lineage.’”

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! Which warriors from which side were delighted and advanced to fight first? Who were confident in their minds and who were dejected and dispirited? Who struck first in the battle that makes the heart tremble? Was it from my side or that of the Pandavas? O Sanjaya! Tell me all this. Amidst whose soldiers were garlands and pastes fragrant? ⁷⁰ Whose warriors roared and uttered auspicious words?”

‘Sanjaya said, “At that time, the soldiers from both sides were cheerful. The garlands and pastes of both sides were equally fragrant. O bull among

the Bharata lineage! The soldiers were arrayed in battle formation and when they met each other, there was an extremely terrible encounter. There was the tumultuous sound of musical instruments, intermingled with that of conch shells and drums. There was the trumpeting of elephants and the soldiers were filled with joy.”

CHAPTER 883(23)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! Having gathered on the holy plains of Kurukshetra, wanting to fight, what did my sons and the sons of Pandu do?”

‘Sanjaya said, “At that time, on seeing the Pandava soldiers assembled in battle formation, King Duryodhana went to the preceptor ⁷¹ and spoke the following words. ‘O preceptor! Look at this great army of the Pandavas, assembled in battle formation by the son of Drupada, ⁷² your talented student. Here there are courageous warriors with mighty bows, the equals of Bhima and Arjuna in battle—Yuyudhana, ⁷³ Virata, Drupada and other maharathas, Dhristaketu ⁷⁴ and Chekitana, ⁷⁵ the valiant king of Kashi, Purujit from the Kuntibhoja clan and Shaibya, greatest among men, the powerful Yudhamanyu, ⁷⁶ the brave Uttamouja, ⁷⁷ the son of Subhadra, ⁷⁸ the sons of Droupadi—all of them are maharathas. O best among brahmanas! Now you should know the main warriors and leaders in my army. For your knowledge, I am naming them. You yourself, and Bhishma, and Karna, and Kripa, who wins battles, Ashvatthama, and Vikarna ⁷⁹ and the son of Somadatta. ⁸⁰ There are many other brave warriors, ready to give up their lives for my sake. All of them are skilled in battle and they are armed with various weapons of attack. ⁸¹ That army of ours, protected by Bhishma, is unlimited. But this army of theirs, protected by Bhima, is limited. ⁸² All of you occupy your respective positions at all the entry points to the army formations. It is Bhishma who must be protected.’

“Creating happiness in his ⁸³ heart, the powerful eldest of the Kuru clan and the grandfather roared loudly like a lion and blew his conch shell. Then, suddenly, conch shells and kettledrums, other kinds of drums and trumpets began to blare. That sound became tremendous. Then, seated in a great chariot to which white horses were harnessed, Madhava ⁸⁴ and Pandava ⁸⁵ blew their divine conch shells. Hrishikesha ⁸⁶ blew the conch shell named Panchajanya and Dhananjaya ⁸⁷ blew the conch shell named Devadatta. Vrikodara, ⁸⁸ whose deeds give rise to fear, blew the giant conch shell named Poundra. King Yudhishtira, the son of Kunti, blew the conch shell named Anantavijaya. Nakula blew the conch shell named Sughosha and Sahadeva blew the conch shell named Manipushpaka. The king of Kashi, with the great bow, and maharatha Shikhandi, Dhristadyumna, Virata and Satyaki, who is never defeated, Drupada, the sons of Droupadi, and the mighty-armed son of Subhadra, all of them blew their separate conch shells, O lord of the earth! That tremendous sound echoed in the sky and on earth and pierced the hearts of those who were on the side of the sons of Dhritarashtra. Then, the son of Pandu, ⁸⁹ with the monkey on his banner, saw the friends of Dhritarashtra thus arranged in battle formation and got ready to use his weapons. O lord of the earth! He raised his bow and told Hrishikesha the following words. ‘O Achyuta! ⁹⁰ Place my chariot in between the two armies, while I look at those who are desirous of battle and are assembled here. Let me see with whom I will have to fight in this war-related business. In a desire to do good to the evil-hearted son of Dhritarashtra, they have gathered here, desirous of fighting. I want to see them.’ O, descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus spoken to by Gudakesha, ⁹¹ Hrishikesha placed that magnificent chariot between the two armies, in front of Bhishma, Drona and all the other rulers of the earth and said, ‘O Partha! Look at those of the Kuru clan who are assembled here.’ There, Partha saw fathers and grandfathers, teachers and maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons and friends, ⁹² fathers-in-law and well-wishers in those two assembled armies.

“Seeing them, all the friends and relatives assembled there, the son of Kunti was overcome with great pity.⁹³ And in sadness, uttered the following words. ‘O Krishna! Having seen these relatives here, assembled with a desire to fight, my body is going numb and my mouth is going dry. My body is quivering and my body hair is standing up. My skin is burning and the Gandiva is slipping from my hands. O Keshava! I cannot stand and my mind is in a whirl. The omens that I see are ill ones. I don’t see any good that can come from killing one’s relatives in a war. O Krishna! I don’t want victory. Nor do I want the kingdom or happiness. O Govinda! What will we do with the kingdom or with pleasures or with life itself? Those for whose sake we want the kingdom and pleasures and happiness, they are gathered here in war, ready to give up their lives and their riches—preceptors, fathers, sons and grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives. O Madhusudana! I don’t want to kill them, even if they kill me. Forget this earth, even for the kingdoms of the three worlds. O Janardana! What pleasure will we derive from killing the sons of Dhritarashtra? Although they are assassins,⁹⁴ sin alone will be our lot if we kill them. Therefore, we cannot kill the sons of Dhritarashtra, with their friends. O Madhava! How can we be happy after killing our relatives? Although their minds are befuddled with greed and they do not see the sin that comes from opposing friends or from destroying the family line. O Janardana! We can see the sin that comes from destroying the family line. Why should we not have the knowledge to refrain from committing this sin? When the lineage is destroyed, the traditional family dharma is also destroyed. When dharma is destroyed, evil overwhelms the entire lineage. O Krishna! When evil arises, the women of the family become corrupted. O descendant of the Vrishnis! When the women are corrupted, hybrid castes are born.⁹⁵ Hybrid castes ensure that the lineage, and those who destroyed the lineage, both go to hell. Because their ancestors fall⁹⁶ and are deprived of offerings of funereal cakes and drink. From those sins of those who destroy the lineage and from hybrid castes being generated, the ancient dharma of the castes

and the dharma of the family are both destroyed. O Janardana! If the family dharma is destroyed, those men are doomed to spend an eternity in hell. So we have heard. Alas! Because of our greed for the kingdom and for happiness, we have got ready to kill our relatives. We are certain to commit a great sin. With me unarmed and unresisting, if the sons of Dhritarashtra, with weapons in their hands, kill me in battle, that will be better for me.’ Saying this, in that battlefield, Arjuna sat down in his chariot. He threw away his bow and arrows, his mind overwhelmed with grief.”

CHAPTER 884(24)

‘Sanjaya said, “Seeing him ⁹⁷ thus overcome with pity, ⁹⁸ his eyes filled with tears and struck thus with grief, Madhusudana spoke the following words.

“‘The lord said, ‘O Arjuna! From where, when we have this emergency, has this kind of weakness overcome you? This does not lead to heaven or fame, and characterizes those who are not aryas. O Partha! Give up this weakness, this is not deserving of you. O one who scorches the foes! Give up this petty weakness of heart.’

“‘Arjuna said, ‘O Madhusudana! How will I use arrows to fight in this war against Bhishma and Drona? O slayer of enemies! They are deserving of worship. In this world, it is better to beg for alms than to kill one’s respected preceptors. If I kill my elders, the wealth and other objects of desire that I enjoy, will be drenched in their blood. I don’t know which is better for us, they defeat us or we defeat them. The sons of Dhritarashtra are in front of me. Those are the people we don’t want to kill in order to live. My normal nature has been overtaken by a sense of helplessness. ⁹⁹ Confused about what is dharma, I am asking you. Tell me that which is decidedly best for me. I am your disciple. I have sought refuge in you. Instruct me. This grief is exploiting my senses and I don’t see what will remedy that, even if I win lordship over the gods, or this earth, without any enemies and prosperous.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “Having said this to Hrishikesha, Gudakesha, the scorcher of foes, told Govinda, ‘I will not fight,’ and fell silent. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! To the person who was immersed in grief between the two armies, as if with a smile, Hrishikesha spoke the following words.

“The lord said, ‘You speak as if you are wise, but you are grieving over those that one should not sorrow over. The wise don’t sorrow over those who are dead or those who are alive. It is not the case that I, or you, or these kings, did not exist before this. Nor is it the case that we won’t exist in the future, all of us will be there. The soul passes through childhood, youth and age in this body, and likewise, attains another body. The wise don’t get bewildered by this. O Kounteya! Because of contact between senses and objects, feelings of warmth and cold, pleasure and pain result. But these are temporary and are created and disappear. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Therefore, tolerate these. O best among men! The wise person who is not affected by these and who looks upon happiness and unhappiness equally, attains the right to immortality. That which is untrue doesn’t have an existence. That which is true has no destruction. But those who know the truth realize the ends of both these. ¹⁰⁰ But know that which pervades all of this is never destroyed. No one can destroy that which is without change. ¹⁰¹ It has been said that all these bodies inhabited by the soul are capable of destruction. But the soul is eternal, incapable of destruction and incapable of being established through proof. Therefore, O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Fight. He who knows this ¹⁰² as a slayer and he who thinks of this as something that is slain, both of them do not know. This is not a slayer, nor can it be slain. This is never born, nor does it ever die. This does not come into existence because it has been born. This has no birth, it is eternal and without destruction. It has no end. When the body is killed, this is not killed. ¹⁰³ O Partha! He who knows this to be without destruction, eternal, without birth and incapable of change, how can that person cause anyone to be slain? Or how can he slay anyone? Like a person discards worn-out clothes and accepts others

that are new, like that, the soul discards worn-out bodies and attains others that are new. Weapons cannot cut this. ¹⁰⁴ Fire cannot burn this. Nor can water wet this. And the wind cannot dry this. This cannot be cut. This cannot be burnt. This cannot be wetted. And this cannot be dried. This is eternal and is everywhere. This is stable and does not move. This has no beginning. It has been said that this has no manifestation, that this cannot be thought of and that this has no transformation. ¹⁰⁵ Therefore, knowing this to be like that, you should not grieve.

““O mighty-armed warrior! But if you think this to be subject to continual birth and continual death, even then, you should not grieve for this. Because death is inevitable for anyone who is born and birth is inevitable for anyone who is dead. Therefore, because this is inevitable, you should not grieve. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Beings are not manifest in the beginning. They are manifest in the middle and are not manifest again after death. What is there to sorrow over? ¹⁰⁶ Some people see this ¹⁰⁷ as a wonder. Like that, some others speak of this as a wonder. And some others hear of this as a wonder. But having heard, they are unable to understand this. ¹⁰⁸ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In everyone’s body, the atman is indestructible. Therefore, you should not mourn about any being. ¹⁰⁹

““Also considering your natural dharma, you should not waver. Because there is nothing better for a kshatriya than a war fought for the sake of dharma. O Partha! This war has arrived on its own, like an open door to heaven. Happy are the kshatriyas who obtain a war like this. But if you do not take part in this war in the cause of dharma, then you will forsake your natural dharma and fame, and sin will accrue to you. And all people will forever talk about your ill fame. For someone who is honoured, dishonour is worse than death. These great warriors will think that you have withdrawn from the war because of your fear. And those who have so far respected you will lighten their opinion of you. Your enemies will say many things that should not be said and will criticize your prowess. Is

anything more painful than that? If you are slain, you will attain heaven. If you win, you will enjoy the earth. O Kounteya! Therefore, arise, deciding certainly to fight. Therefore, get ready to fight, looking upon happiness and unhappiness, gain and loss and victory and defeat equally. And sin will not touch you. O Partha! You have just been told the wisdom that comes from knowledge of the self. ¹¹⁰ Now listen to the knowledge about yoga.

¹¹¹ When united with this knowledge, you will be able to discard the bonds of action. In this, ¹¹² the possibility of effort coming to waste does not exist. Nor is there the chance of committing a sin. Even a little bit of this dharma protects from great fear. O descendant of the Kuru lineage!

This certain knowledge is unwavering. ¹¹³ But for those who cannot focus, their wisdom is many-branched and like the infinite. O Partha!

Those who are ignorant say these flowery words, praising the Vedas ¹¹⁴ and claiming there is nothing else. They are addicted to desire, think of heaven as the supreme objective and are enamoured of the fruits of birth and action. ¹¹⁵ They praise many rites and rituals that lead to pleasure and wealth. They are addicted to pleasure and wealth and because of those words, their minds are deluded. They cannot focus on one object—the intellect that allows one to discriminate. The Vedas deal with the three

gunas. ¹¹⁶ O Arjuna! Rise above the three *gunas*. Without doubt, ¹¹⁷ always resort to *sattva*. Do not be bothered about that which is yet to be attained or preserving what has already been attained. ¹¹⁸ Realize the

atman. Whatever purpose is achieved by many small bodies of water is also achieved by one large body of water. Like that, whatever all the Vedas achieve is achieved by a person who knows the brahman. You have the right to action alone. You never have the right to the fruit. Do not be motivated to act because of the fruit. But don't be motivated to not acting either. O Dhananjaya! Perform action by resorting to yoga. ¹¹⁹ Give up attachment. Look upon success and failure equally. This equal attitude is known as yoga. O Dhananjaya! Action is far inferior to the yoga of

wisdom. ¹²⁰ Seek refuge in this wisdom. Pitiabale are those who crave after the fruit. He who has this wisdom, discards good action and evil action in this life itself. Therefore, use yoga in what you do. Yoga is the skill of action. The learned who have this wisdom abandon the fruit of action and are freed from the fetters of birth. They certainly attain that place which is bereft of all blemishes. When your intellect transcends this maze of delusion, then you will attain indifference between that which has already been heard and that which is yet to be heard. ¹²¹ Your mind is distracted at what you have heard. But when your intellect is unwavering and focused on samadhi, then you will attain yoga.’ ¹²²

“Arjuna asked, ‘O Keshava! What are the signs of a person who has attained samadhi and whose intellect doesn’t waver? How does he speak, how does he sit and how does he walk?’

“The lord said, ‘O Partha! A person is said to be unwavering in intellect when he banishes all desires from his mind. He is content within his own atman. He is not disturbed by unhappiness and he is beyond desiring happiness. He has overcome attachment, fear and anger and he is known as a sage who is unwavering in his intellect. In everything, he has no emotion, regardless of whether something pleasant or something unpleasant has been attained. He is not pleased, nor is he dissatisfied and in him, wisdom is established. Like a tortoise withdraws its limbs, such a person withdraws his senses, in every way, from sensual objects. In him is wisdom established. Sensual objects are withdrawn from the body of a person who is starving himself; ¹²³ but not desire. In him, ¹²⁴ who has seen the paramatman, even desire is restrained. O Kounteya! Even if a learned man takes care, the turbulent senses violently steal his mind. He who is devoted to me, controls all those ¹²⁵ and focuses his mind on me. If a person can so control his senses, in him is wisdom established. If a man thinks about sensual objects, this gives birth to attachment about those. ¹²⁶ From attachment is created desire and desire gives birth to anger. Anger gives birth to delusion and delusion leads to confusion of

memory. ¹²⁷ From confusion of memory comes loss of intellect and loss of intellect results in destruction. But he who has controlled his mind is freed from attachment and hatred. ¹²⁸ Having used himself to control his senses, he uses these to enjoy objects and satisfy himself. When there is such serenity, in him is eliminated all unhappiness. Because in the mind of someone at peace, wisdom is quickly established. He who has no control, has no intellect. He who has no control, has no thought. ¹²⁹ Without thought, there is no peace. How can there be happiness for someone who has no peace? The wind rocks a boat on the water. Like that, the mind follows a sense ¹³⁰ devoted to objects and even a single sense robs him of wisdom. O, mighty-armed one! Therefore, he whose senses have been withdrawn from objects in every way, in him has wisdom been steadily established. When it is night to ordinary beings, the controlled person is awake then. When ordinary beings are awake, the sage perceives that as night. Just as the waters enter an ocean and leave the full ocean undisturbed, like that, all sensual objects enter that person, but leave him at peace, unlike those attached to desire. A man who gives up all desire and exists without longing, without ego and without a sense of ownership, he attains peace. O Partha! This is the state of being established in the brahman. If one attains this, one is not deluded. Even at the end, ¹³¹ established in this state, one attains union with the brahman.””

CHAPTER 885(25) ¹³²

““Arjuna said, ‘O Janardana! If in your opinion knowledge is superior to action, then why are you engaging me in this terrible action? These mixed words seem to be confounding my intellect. Tell me definitely that one thing that is best for me.’

““The lord said, ‘O pure of heart! I have said it before that in this world, there are two paths. There is jnana yoga for those who follow sankhya and there is karma yoga for *yogis*. ¹³³ Without performing action, man is not freed from the bondage of action. And resorting to *sannyasa* ¹³⁴ does not

result in liberation. No one can ever exist, even for a short while, without performing action. Because the qualities of nature ¹³⁵ force everyone to perform action. The ignorant person who exists by controlling his organs of action, ¹³⁶ while his mind remembers the senses, is said to be deluded and is a hypocrite. ¹³⁷

O Arjuna! But he who restrains the senses through his mind and starts the yoga of action with the organs of action, while remaining unattached, he is superior. Therefore, do the prescribed action. ¹³⁸ Because action is superior to not performing action. And without action, even survival of the body is not possible. O Kounteya! All action other than that for sacrifices shackles people to the bondage of action. ¹³⁹ Therefore, do action for that purpose, without attachment. Earlier, ¹⁴⁰ Prajapati ¹⁴¹ created beings, accompanied by a sacrifice ¹⁴² and said—with this, ¹⁴³ may you increase, and may this grant you all objects you desire. Through this, ¹⁴⁴ cherish the gods and those gods will cherish you. By cherishing each other, you will obtain that which is most desired. Because, cherished by the sacrifice, the gods will give you all desired objects. He who enjoys these without giving them ¹⁴⁵ their share, is certainly a thief. Righteous people who enjoy the leftovers ¹⁴⁶ of sacrifices are freed from all sins. But those sinners who cook only for themselves live on sin. Beings are created from food and food is created from rain clouds. Rain clouds are created from sacrifices and sacrifices are created from action. Know that action is created from the Vedas and the Vedas are created from the brahman. Therefore, the omnipresent brahman is always present in sacrifices. ¹⁴⁷ In this way, the cycle goes on and he who does not follow this, is addicted to his senses and lives a sinner's life. O Partha! He lives in vain. But the man who takes pleasure in the atman, is content with the atman and is satiated with the atman, has no duties. In this world, he has no need for action, nor anything to lose from inaction. He doesn't need the refuge of any being for

anything. Therefore, be unattached and always perform prescribed action. Because a man who performs action when unattached attains the highest liberation.

“““Janaka ¹⁴⁸ and others attained liberation through action. One should perform action with an eye to preserving the worlds. Whatever a great man does, ordinary people also do that. Whatever he accepts as duty, others also follow that. O Partha! In the three worlds, I have no duties. There is nothing I haven't attained, there is nothing yet to be attained. Yet, I am engaged in action. O Partha! If I ever relax and stop performing action, then men will follow my path in every way. If I don't perform action, then all these worlds will be destroyed. I will be the lord of hybrids ¹⁴⁹ and responsible for the destruction of these beings. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Ignorant people perform action by being attached to that action. But the wise perform similar action unattached, for the welfare and preservation of the worlds. The wise will not befuddle the minds of the ignorant who are attached to action. Being knowledgeable, they will themselves perform all action and keep them ¹⁵⁰ engaged. All action is completed, in every way, through the qualities of nature. ¹⁵¹ He who is deluded by the ego, thinks that he is the doer. O mighty-armed one! But he who truly knows the division of the qualities ¹⁵² and different types of action ¹⁵³ knows that qualities manifest themselves in senses and does not get attached. ¹⁵⁴ Those who are deluded by nature's qualities are attached to action by senses and organs. The omniscient should not disturb ¹⁵⁵ those ignorant and misguided people. Focusing your mind on the supreme being, vest all action in me. Be without desire, without ownership and without fever ¹⁵⁶ and fight. People who, faithfully and without finding fault, always follow this view of mine, they too are freed from the bondage of action. ¹⁵⁷ But know that those who in an attempt to find fault don't follow this view of mine, they have no sense and all their knowledge will be deluded and destroyed. Even a wise person acts according to his own

nature. Nature drives all beings. Why should one use restraint? ¹⁵⁸ For each sense, in its respective area, attachment and aversion are certain. ¹⁵⁹ But don't be overcome by those. They are obstacles. One's own dharma, ¹⁶⁰ even if followed imperfectly, is superior to someone else's dharma, even if followed perfectly. It is better to be slain while following one's own dharma. Someone else's dharma is tinged with fear.'

“Arjuna said, ‘O descendant of the Vrishni lineage! By whom are these men compelled? Despite being unwilling, it is almost as if they are forced into evil action.’ ¹⁶¹

“The lord said, ‘This is desire. This is anger. These are born from the rajas quality. These are insatiable and great sins. ¹⁶² Here, ¹⁶³ know them to be enemies. Like smoke covers the fire, like dust covers the mirror, like the womb covers the foetus, in that way, this ¹⁶⁴ is covered by that. ¹⁶⁵ O Kounteya! This is the perennial enemy of the wise. Knowledge is covered by this desire that is insatiable like the fire. All senses, the mind and intellect, are its ¹⁶⁶ seat. This ¹⁶⁷ uses these ¹⁶⁸ to veil knowledge and delude beings. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Therefore, you should first control your senses. Destroy this ¹⁶⁹ that is like sin and is the destroyer of knowledge. ¹⁷⁰ It is said the senses are superior. ¹⁷¹ The mind is superior to the senses. Intellect is superior to the mind. That ¹⁷² is superior to intellect. O mighty-armed one! In this way, use intellect to realize that which is superior to the intellect. Use your inner strength to calm the atman ¹⁷³ and destroy the enemy that is difficult to defeat, in the form of desire.’”

““The lord said, ‘I instructed this eternal yoga ¹⁷⁴ to Vivasvat ¹⁷⁵ and Vivasvat told it to Manu. Manu told it to Ikshaku. In this way, handed down by tradition, the royal sages ¹⁷⁶ knew this. ¹⁷⁷

O scorcher of foes! In this world, because of the long passage of time, this yoga has been destroyed. ¹⁷⁸ You are my follower and friend. ¹⁷⁹ Therefore, today, I will tell you that old yoga, because this is excellent and secret knowledge.’

““Arjuna said, ‘Your birth was later and Vivasvat’s birth was earlier. How will I understand that you instructed this earlier?’

““The lord said, ‘O Arjuna! Many are the births that you and I have been through. I know them all. O scorcher of foes! You know not. I have no birth. I am indestructible. I am the lord of all beings. But even then, though existing in my own nature, I come into existence through my own resolution. ¹⁸⁰ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Whenever dharma goes into a decline and adharma is on the ascendance, then I create myself. To protect the righteous and to destroy the sinners and to establish dharma, I manifest myself from yuga to yuga. ¹⁸¹ O Arjuna! He who thus knows the nature of my divine ¹⁸² birth and action, he is not born again when he dies, but attains me. Many, purified through the meditation of knowledge, have immersed themselves in me and sought refuge in me, discarding attachment, fear and anger. O Partha! Whoever worships me, in whatever way, I entertain them in that way. Everywhere, men follow along my path. In this world, people who desire success in their action, worship gods. Because in the world of men, success through action occurs quickly. ¹⁸³ In accordance with gunas and action, the four varnas were created by me. ¹⁸⁴ But despite being the creator of these, know me to be constant ¹⁸⁵ and not the agent. ¹⁸⁶ Actions do not touch me, nor do I desire the fruits of action.

He who knows me in this fashion, is not tied down by action. Knowing this, those who sought liberation in the past, performed action. Therefore, you perform action alone, the path followed by predecessors in earlier times. Even the wise are confused about what is action and what is inaction. ¹⁸⁷ Therefore, I will tell you what action ¹⁸⁸ is. Knowing this, you will be freed from evil. Action itself has to be understood and prohibited action must also be understood. Inaction must also be understood. Because the path of action is difficult to comprehend. He who perceives inaction in action and perceives action in inaction, he is wise among men, has yoga and has the right to all action. ¹⁸⁹ He whose efforts are always devoid of desire for fruit and ego, ¹⁹⁰ he whose actions have been burnt by the fire of knowledge, the learned call him wise. He who has given up attachment to action and its fruit is always content and without refuge. ¹⁹¹ Even when he is immersed in action, he does nothing. Without attachment, controlled in mind and senses, having discarded all ownership ¹⁹² and performing action only through the body, ¹⁹³ he does not attain the bondage of sin. Satisfied with unsought gains, ¹⁹⁴ beyond opposites, ¹⁹⁵ bereft of envy and regarding success and failure equally, even if he performs action, he is not bound down. Beyond attachment, free ¹⁹⁶ and with a mind established in knowledge, when he performs action for a yajna alone, ¹⁹⁷ everything is destroyed. ¹⁹⁸ The receptacles used for offerings ¹⁹⁹ are the brahman. The oblations are the brahman. In the fire that is the brahman, the offerer, who is the brahman, performs the sacrifice. He who sees thus and is immersed in the brahman in all action attains the brahman alone as a destination.

“““Other yogis perform divine yajnas. ²⁰⁰ Others use the yajna as an offering to the fire that is the brahman. ²⁰¹ Others offer senses like hearing as offerings to the fire that is self-control. ²⁰² Others offer sounds and other objects to the fire that is the senses. ²⁰³ Others offer all action

of the senses ²⁰⁴ and action of the breath of life ²⁰⁵ as offerings to the fire of self-control, ²⁰⁶ lit up through knowledge. Some use the yajna of offering gifts, others use the yajna of penance. Some use the yajna of yoga and still others, firm in their resolve and careful, use the yajna of knowledge. ²⁰⁷ Others offer the prana breath in the apana breath ²⁰⁸ and the apana breath in the prana breath. ²⁰⁹

Others restrain the flow of the prana and apana breath and practise pranayama. ²¹⁰ Others control their food and offer the senses to the breath of life. ²¹¹ All these, learned in the yajnas, become sinless through yajnas. The leftovers ²¹² of sacrifices are like amrita and those who partake of these attain the eternal brahman. O best of the Kuru lineage! Those who don't perform yajnas have no existence in this world, forget other worlds. Many yajnas of this type are prescribed in the brahman's mouth. ²¹³ Know them all to be the outcome of action. Knowing this, you will attain liberation. O scorcher of foes! A yajna performed with knowledge is superior to a yajna full of objects. ²¹⁴ O Partha! All actions and their fruit end in knowledge. Attain that knowledge by prostrating, questioning and serving. The wise, those who are versed with the truth, will instruct you in wisdom. O Pandava! Knowing that, you will never fall prey to this kind of delusion again. Through this, you will see all the beings in your atman and then in me. Even if you are a greater sinner than all the other sinners, you will cross all oceans of sin with the boat of knowledge alone. O Arjuna! Like a raging fire burns to ashes pieces of wood, like that, the fire of knowledge burns all action to ashes. In this world, there is nothing as pure as knowledge. With the passage of time, he who is accomplished in yoga, himself attains that ²¹⁵ within his heart. Knowledge is attained by the faithful, the unwavering and those who control their senses. Having attained knowledge, they quickly achieve supreme peace. The ignorant, the faithless and the doubting are destroyed. For the doubting person, this world, other worlds and happiness don't exist. O Dhananjaya! He who has

offered up all action through yoga and he who has used knowledge to slice away doubt, actions cannot bind such a person—who is focused on the atman. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Therefore, use the sword of knowledge to slice away this doubt in your heart, resulting from your own ignorance. Follow yoga! Arise!””

CHAPTER 887(27) ²¹⁶

“Arjuna said, ‘O Krishna! You are asking me to give up all action and you are also asking me to practise yoga. ²¹⁷ Between these two, tell me decidedly which one is better.’ ²¹⁸

“The lord said, ‘Renunciation and action both lead to liberation. But of these two, karma yoga is superior to renunciation of action. O mighty-armed one! He who does not desire and he who does not hate, know him to be a perpetual sannyasi. ²¹⁹ Freed from opposites, ²²⁰ he is happily freed from bondage. The ignorant, ²²¹ not the wise, speak of renunciation and action as distinct. ²²² If one of these is followed properly, the fruits of both result. Whatever place is attained by the followers of knowledge is also attained by those who practise action. He truly sees, who sees renunciation and action as identical. O mighty-armed one! Without action, renunciation is only the cause of unhappiness. ²²³ The sage who uses yoga attains the brahman quickly. He who practises yoga, he who is pure of heart, he who has controlled his body, he who has controlled his senses, he who sees his own atman in the atman of all beings, he is not tied down, even if he performs action. The wise who follow yoga know that they are not doing anything even when they see, hear, touch, smell, eat, go, dream ²²⁴ or breathe, speak, discard, accept, open and close. ²²⁵ They think of the senses circulating among the senses. ²²⁶ He who establishes himself in the brahman ²²⁷ and giving up attachment, performs action, is not touched by sin, like water on the leaf of a lotus. To purify their hearts, yogis give up attachment ²²⁸ and perform action only with their bodies,

minds, intellect and senses. Attached to yoga and discarding attachment to fruits of action, they attain perpetual peace. ²²⁹ Those who do not follow yoga and are attached to fruits because of desire remain in bondage.

Discarding all action through his mind, ²³⁰ the person who controls his body, the city with the nine gates, ²³¹ remains in happiness. He doesn't do anything himself. Nor does he cause anyone to do anything. The atman ²³² doesn't create ownership in the body, nor action. Nor does it create a relation with the fruits of action. Nature ²³³ acts. The omnipresent lord doesn't accept the sins or the good deeds of anybody. Knowledge is shrouded in ignorance. That is why beings are deluded. But in those in whom that ignorance has been destroyed by the knowledge of the atman, in them that knowledge expresses the great truth, ²³⁴ like the sun. Those whose intellect is focused on that, ²³⁵ egos are focused on that, devotion is focused on that and adherence is focused on that, those in whom sins have been destroyed through knowledge, those beings are not reborn. ²³⁶ The wise look equally upon a brahmana who is learned and humble, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste. ²³⁷ Those whose minds are established in equality overcome the earth in this world. ²³⁸ Because the brahman is equal and without fault, therefore, they ²³⁹ remain established in the brahman. Established in the brahman, such a person learned in the brahman, is poised in intellect and without delusion, not delighted at receiving something pleasant, or agitated at receiving something unpleasant. Unattached to external objects, his mind focused on the brahman, he obtains the happiness that vests in the atman. He enjoys eternal bliss. Pleasures from touch ²⁴⁰ have a beginning and an end and are the reason for unhappiness. O Kounteya! The wise person does not obtain pleasure from these. In this, ²⁴¹ before giving up the body, he who can tolerate the forces of desire and anger is a yogi and such a man is happy. He whose happiness is inside, ²⁴² he whose pleasure is inside and he whose light is inside, that yogi alone has realized the brahman and

obtains liberation in the brahman. Those who are without sin, without doubt, controlled in mind and engaged in the welfare of all beings, such rishis attain liberation in the brahman. Freed from desire and anger, controlled in mind and knowing the atman, such sages attain liberation in the brahman all around them. ²⁴³ Banishing external objects of touch from the mind, focusing the eyes between the two eyebrows, controlling the prana and the apana breath equally within the nose, ²⁴⁴ poised in the senses, mind and intellect, beyond desire, fear and anger, wishing liberation, such a sage is always free. Knowing ²⁴⁵ me to be the enjoyer of all yajnas and penance, the lord of all the worlds and the well-wisher of all beings, attains peace.’”

CHAPTER 888(28) ²⁴⁶

““The lord said, ‘An ascetic ²⁴⁷ and a yogi is he who performs prescribed action without attachment to the fruits of the action, not someone who gives up sacrifices ²⁴⁸ and action. O descendant of the Pandu lineage! What is known as asceticism, know that to be yoga. Because without giving up desire, no one can become a yogi. For a sage desirous of ascending to yoga, action is said to be the means. For a person who has ascended to yoga, tranquillity ²⁴⁹ is said to be the means. When a person who gives up desire loses addiction to sensual outcomes and is also not attached to action, then he is said to have ascended to yoga. Use the atman to raise the atman. Do not lower the atman. The atman is the atman’s friend and the atman is the atman’s enemy. ²⁵⁰ The atman which has been used to conquer the atman is the atman’s friend. For someone who has failed to control the atman, the atman harms like an enemy. For someone who has controlled the atman ²⁵¹ and is tranquil, ²⁵² the paramatman ²⁵³ is undisturbed with cold, warmth, happiness, unhappiness and respect and disrespect. He whose atman is satiated with knowledge, ²⁵⁴ who is undisturbed and has conquered his senses, and he who looks upon a lump

of earth, stone and gold equally, is said to be yogi who has achieved union. Equal in treatment towards well-wisher, colleague, ²⁵⁵ enemy, neutral, ²⁵⁶ arbiter, a hateful person, friend ²⁵⁷ and a righteous person or a sinner, he ²⁵⁸ is superior.

““Seated in a secluded place, alone, controlled in mind and body, without desire, without receiving and giving, ²⁵⁹ a yogi should always try to pacify his atman. In a pure place that is not too high and not too low, unmoving, he will place his seat, cloth and hide on kusha grass. ²⁶⁰ There, focusing the intellect, controlling the action of the mind and the senses, seated on that seat, he will practise yoga to purify the atman. Still, body, head and neck erect and unmoving, gazing at the tip of one's nose ²⁶¹ and not looking in any other direction. Tranquil in the atman, without fear, established in the rite of brahmacharya, controlling the mind and uniting the intellect with me, immerse yourself in me. In this way, the yogi will always pacify the atman and be unwavering in his mind, and established in me, will attain supreme and peaceful liberation. O Arjuna! He who eats too much cannot achieve yoga. Nor he who doesn't eat at all. Nor he who sleeps too much or stays awake too much. He who is measured in food and movement, measured in effort towards action, measured in sleep and awakening. For him, yoga destroys unhappiness. When the intellect is specially controlled and established in the atman, in that situation, indifferent towards all desire, yoga is said to have been achieved. For a yogi whose intellect is controlled and the atman is united, know the simile to be a lamp that doesn't flicker in a place where there is no wind. When the mind is controlled and rendered inactive through the practice of yoga, when the atman sees the atman in the atman and is satiated. ²⁶² When he ²⁶³ feels the extreme bliss that is beyond the senses and realized through the intellect, undisturbed from truth. ²⁶⁴ Obtaining that, not ²⁶⁵ thinking other gains to be superior to this. Established in that, not disturbed even by great unhappiness. Know this, without any contact with unhappiness, to be

yoga. Without hopelessness, ²⁶⁶ one must practise that yoga with perseverance. Forsaking in entirety all desire that results from wishes, ²⁶⁷ using the mind itself to restrain the senses from everything, using concentrated intellect to gradually withdraw, establishing the mind in the atman and thinking about nothing, ²⁶⁸ withdrawing from whatever the fickle and restless mind veers towards, withdrawing it from that, bring it under the control of the atman. Tranquil in mind, having pacified the rajas quality, without sin, ²⁶⁹ having attained the brahman, the yogi achieves supreme happiness. Like that, always concentrating on the atman, the pure yogi easily obtains intense bliss from proximity to the brahman. The person immersed in yoga looks on everything equally and sees the atman in all beings and all beings in the atman. He sees me everywhere and everything in me. I am never invisible to him. Nor is he invisible to me. He is based in equality and worships me, I who am present in everything. Wherever that yogi is, he is established in me. O Arjuna! He who compares ²⁷⁰ with his own self and regards happiness and unhappiness in everything ²⁷¹ equally, that yogi is supreme, according to me.’

“Arjuna said, ‘O Madhusudana! Because of restlessness, ²⁷² I don’t see the yoga based on equality that you have propounded as permanent. O Krishna! The mind is restless and the senses strong and firm. Therefore, I think restraining it is as difficult as the wind.’ ²⁷³

“The lord said, ‘O mighty-armed one! There is no doubt that the mind is restless and difficult to control. But O Kounteya! Through practice and detachment, it can be restrained. My view is that yoga is difficult for someone whose mind is uncontrolled. But it is possible to achieve for someone whose mind is controlled and who makes special effort.’

“Arjuna said, ‘O Krishna! A person who has faithfully practised yoga, but later becomes careless and his mind deviates from yoga, cannot achieve liberation through yoga. What happens to him? O mighty-armed one! Distracted from the path of attaining the brahman, such a wavering person is dislodged from both, ²⁷⁴ like a torn cloud. Doesn’t he perish? O

Krishna! I have this doubt that only you can completely eliminate.
Because there is no one other than you who can remove this doubt.’

“‘The lord said, ‘O Partha! In this world, nor in the other world, is there any destruction. Because, O son, ²⁷⁵ a person who acts well ²⁷⁶ never comes to grief. He who has deviated from the path of yoga attains the worlds of the righteous ²⁷⁷ and dwells there for many years. Thereafter, he is born in a righteous and wealthy household. Or he is born in the family of wise yogis. But such birth is very rare in this world. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! In that birth, obtains ²⁷⁸ that intelligence ²⁷⁹ about liberation from an earlier birth and thereafter, strives again for liberation. Because of that earlier practice, is almost involuntarily, attracted. ²⁸⁰ A person who seeks yoga transcends the Vedas. ²⁸¹ Striving harder than on that earlier occasion, pure in heart, the yogi obtains liberation after many lives and later, achieves the supreme objective. The yogi is superior to those who practise austerities, superior to the learned ²⁸² and superior to those who perform action. ²⁸³ That is my view. O Arjuna! Therefore, become a yogi. My view is that he who is devoted and worships me, with his self immersed in me, is the most accomplished among all yogis.’”

CHAPTER 889(29) ²⁸⁴

“‘The lord said, ‘O Partha! Listen to how you will know, without any doubt, the complete truth about me—mind attached to me, seeking refuge in me and immersed in yoga. I will completely tell you about the knowledge with self-realization. ²⁸⁵ Knowing that, there is nothing more remaining to know. Among thousands of men, rarely one tries for liberation. Among those who try for liberation, perhaps one ²⁸⁶ gets to know my true nature. Earth, water, fire, ²⁸⁷ air, sky, mind, intellect and ego—these are the eight parts of my nature. These are inferior nature. ²⁸⁸ O mighty-armed one! Besides this, know my superior and other nature ²⁸⁹

that is the essence of living beings. The universe is held up by this. Know all matter ²⁹⁰ to be born from these. ²⁹¹ I am the reason for the creation of the entire universe and its destruction. O Dhananjaya! There is nothing superior to me. Like jewels on a string, all this is threaded in me. O Kounteya! In the water, I am the sap. In the sun and the moon, I am the radiance. In all the Vedas, I am the Om syllable. ²⁹² In the sky, I am the sound. In humans, I am manifest as prowess, ²⁹³ and as pure fragrance in the earth. I become energy in the fire, life in all living beings. I become austerity in ascetics. O Partha! Know me to be the eternal seed of all beings. I am intellect in the intelligent. I become energy in those who are energetic. O bull among the Bharata lineage! I am strength, without desire and without attachment, ²⁹⁴ in those who are strong. In all living beings, I become desire that is sanctioned by dharma. ²⁹⁵ And know all the three conditions, with sattva, rajas and tamas predominating, ²⁹⁶ to be derived from me. I am not in them. They are in me. This entire universe is deluded by these three gunas and the resultant conditions. And is not able to know me, who is above these and without change. It is indeed difficult to overcome this divine aspect ²⁹⁷ of mine, immersed in gunas. Those who seek refuge in me alone, they are able to overcome this maya. The evildoers, ignorant and worst among men, lose their knowledge because of maya and resort to demonic states. They do not worship me. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O Arjuna! There are four types of people, pure of heart, who worship me—those who are suffering, those who want satisfaction, ²⁹⁸ those who want self-knowledge and those who know. Of these, those who know, always united and worshipping only one, ²⁹⁹ are the best. I am extremely beloved by one who knows. And he is also my beloved. All these ³⁰⁰ are righteous. But the man who knows is like my atman. That is my view. Therefore, the united man who knows seeks refuge in me, the supreme of objectives. After many births are over, he attains the knowledge that Vasudeva is everything and attains me. Such

great souls are extremely rare. Those whose knowledge has been robbed by those desires, according to their own nature, follow prescribed rites to worship other gods. Whatever form a devotee wishes to worship faithfully, in whatever way, in that ³⁰¹ and that, ³⁰² I make the faith firm and unwavering. With that faith, whatever form is worshipped and whatever fruits are obtained as a result, are actually bestowed by me alone. The fruits of those ³⁰³ who have little intellect come to an end. ³⁰⁴ Worshippers of gods attain the gods. My devotees attain me. Those who are ignorant don't realize my supreme and unchanging nature and think of me, the one who is unmanifest, as manifest. Shrouded in my powers of yoga and maya, I am not evident to everyone. I am not born and am without change. But the ignorant world does not know me. O Arjuna! I know all beings in the past, the present and the future. But no one knows me. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O scorcher of foes! All beings are deluded at birth from opposite sensations, ³⁰⁵ resulting from desire and aversion. But those whose sins have been overcome and those who are virtuous in action, they are freed from the delusion of opposite sensations and worship me, firm in their vows. Those who want to free themselves from decay and death and seek refuge in me, they know about the brahman, about the individual atman ³⁰⁶ and about action in its entirety. Those who know me as the one who underlies all beings, all gods and all yajnas, right till the time of death, their mind is fixed on me and they know me.''''

CHAPTER 890(30) ³⁰⁷

“Arjuna asked, ‘O supreme among men! What is that brahman, what is the individual atman ³⁰⁸ and what is action? What is said to underlie all beings and what is said to underlie all gods? ³⁰⁹ O Madhusudana! Who underlies all yajnas ³¹⁰ in this body and how? By those who can control their atmans, how are you known at the time of death?’

“The lord said, ‘The indestructible brahman is the supreme spirit and its inhabitation of individual beings is called adhyatma. Action is the offering ³¹¹ that leads to the creation and sustenance of all beings. O supreme among those who possess bodies! Perishable elements are adhibhuta and the *purusha* is adhidaiva. In this body, I myself am adhiyajna. At the time of death, he who remembers me, gives up his body and leaves, he attains my essence. There is no doubt about this. O Kounteya! Whatever essence is remembered at the time of death, giving up the body, a person immersed in that essence is the essence that he attains. Therefore, always think of me. And fight. With mind and intellect offered to me, you will without doubt attain me alone. O Partha! United in the practice that is like yoga, without following anyone else, thinking of the divine supreme spirit with the mind, attains that. ³¹² He who thinks of the omniscient, without beginning, the controller of everything, finer than the minutest, the upholder of everything, with a form that is beyond thought, self-resplendent like the sun and beyond darkness, ³¹³ at the time of death, ³¹⁴ with devotion, with the mind fixed, with the strength of yoga used to hold the breath of life between the brows, he attains the resplendent supreme spirit. He is the one whom those who know the Vedas speak of as indestructible, he is the one into whom unattached yogis enter, he is the one to attain when brahmacharya is practised, I will briefly tell you about reaching that goal of supreme liberation.

““Using all the senses and organs ³¹⁵ to control the mind and restrain it in the heart, bearing the breath of life between the brows, establishing one’s atman in yoga, uttering the single syllable Om that is the brahman and remembering me, he who gives up his body and leaves, he attains the goal of supreme liberation. O Partha! He who does not think of other things and remembers me every day and all the time, I am easily attainable to that yogi who is always focused. ³¹⁶ Great souls who attain me, because they have achieved supreme liberation, are freed from rebirth, which is transient and the abode of sorrow. O Arjuna! From all the worlds

up to *brahmaloka*, beings have to return. ³¹⁷ But O Kounteya! There is no rebirth for those who have attained me. ³¹⁸ Those who know that a thousand yugas are Brahma's day and a thousand yugas are Brahma's night know the truth about day and night. ³¹⁹ When Brahma's day arrives, every manifest object is created from the unmanifest. When Brahma's night arrives, like that, everything dissolves into the unmanifest. These ³²⁰ are the beings who are born again and again and destroyed when night arrives. O Partha! When day arrives, they are involuntarily created again. But superior to that unmanifest is the other supreme and eternal unmanifest being that is not destroyed when all beings are destroyed. ³²¹ What is spoken of as the unmanifest and indestructible, what is said to be the supreme liberation, attaining which beings do not have to return, that is my supreme abode. O Partha! All beings are established in that. And by that is everything pervaded. That supreme purusha can only be attained through unwavering devotion. O bull among the Bharata lineage! I will now tell you about the road ³²² which, if traversed, doesn't lead to yogis being reborn and about the road which, if traversed, leads to rebirth. The resplendence of the fire, the day, the bright half of the lunar month, ³²³ the six months when the sun heads north, ³²⁴ along that path those who worship the brahman attain the brahman. ³²⁵ Smoke, night, the dark half of the lunar month ³²⁶ and the six months when the sun heads south, ³²⁷ along that path, the yogi attains the energy of the moon and returns again. ³²⁸ In this world, these two paths of light and darkness are said to be eternal. One leads to non-return and the other leads to return. O Partha! Knowing these two paths, a yogi is never deluded. O Arjuna! Therefore, at all times, resort to yoga. Knowing the prescribed good fruit that accrues from knowledge of the Vedas, yajnas, practice of austerities and donation of alms, the yogi transcends all these and attains the supreme and original abode.'""

““The lord said, ‘You are not a detractor. ³³⁰ I will tell you this extremely secret knowledge with self-realization. ³³¹ Knowing this, you will be freed from all evil. This is extremely secret and the king of knowledge. ³³² It is the best, pure, leads to direct and eternal results, is sanctioned by dharma and is easy to practise. O scorcher of foes! People who show disrespect to this dharma don’t attain me and traverse the path of death and this world. This entire universe is pervaded by me in my unmanifest form. All beings are established in me. But I am not established in them. Witness my divine yoga. Again, the beings are not established in me. ³³³ My atman holds up the beings and sustains the beings, but I am not established in the beings. Know that like the great wind, which goes everywhere, and is always established in the sky, all beings are established in me. O Kounteya! At the time of destruction, ³³⁴ all beings are dissolved in my nature and at the time of creation, I create them. I keep my nature under control and repeatedly create these many beings, helpless according to their own nature. ³³⁵ O Dhananjaya! But I am unattached to those acts and am established in indifference. Those acts cannot tie me down. O Kounteya! Because of my lordship, nature gives birth to this universe with its moveable and immovable objects. Because of this, the universe is repeatedly created. ³³⁶ The ignorant do not know my supreme nature as the great lord of all beings. They show disrespect to me as someone who has adopted a human form. Their desire is fruitless, their action is fruitless, their knowledge is fruitless, their minds waver and their deluded nature is ruled by demonic qualities. ³³⁷ O Partha! But those great souls who seek refuge in divine qualities are unwavering in their minds and worship me, knowing me to be the indestructible origin of all beings. Careful and firm in their rites, they ³³⁸ faithfully offer obeisance and always sing my praise, always focused on worshipping me. Some worship me through the yajna that is the path of knowledge. Some worship

me as one, others as separate. ³³⁹ Worshipping as one means regarding the worshipper and the worshipped as identical. This can be called the I, who pervade the universe, am worshipped in many forms. I am *kratu*, I am yajna, I am *svadha*, ³⁴⁰ I am the herbs, I am the mantra, I indeed am the clarified butter, I am the fire, I am the offering. I am the father, mother, grandfather and sustainer of this universe. I am all that is pure and is to be known. I am the Om syllable. I am also the *Rik*, *Saman* and *Yajus*. ³⁴¹ I am the goal, the sustainer, the controller, the witness, the abode, the sanctuary, the well-doer, the creator, the destroyer, the preserver, the repository and the indestructible seed. ³⁴² O Arjuna! I provide heat. I attract the water and rain it down again. I am immortality and death. I am the eternal and the transient. ³⁴³ Those who know the three arts ³⁴⁴ worship me through yajnas, drink the soma juice and purified of sins, wish to attain heaven. They attain sanctified heaven ³⁴⁵ and in heaven, enjoy the celestial objects enjoyed by the gods. Having enjoyed the greatness of heaven, when their good deeds are exhausted, they enter the mortal earth. In this way, the practitioners of the three dharmas, ³⁴⁶ followers of desire, go back and forth. Those who worship me, minds focused on me alone and always immersed in me, I preserve for them what has been attained and what is yet to be attained. ³⁴⁷ O Kounteya! Those with devotion who faithfully worship other gods, they too, worship me alone. But not in the indicated way. Because I alone am the receiver of offerings and the granter of fruits at all yajnas. But they do not know my true nature and therefore, are cast down. ³⁴⁸ Those who worship the gods attain the gods. Those who worship the ancestors attain the ancestors. ³⁴⁹ Those who worship the elements ³⁵⁰ attain the elements. And mine ³⁵¹ attain me. He who faithfully worships me with a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, from that pure-hearted person, I gladly accept those faithful offerings. O Kounteya! Whatever you do, whatever you partake, whatever you offer, whatever you donate, whatever you meditate, offer that to me. In this way, you will be

freed from the bondage of the fruits of righteous and evil action. With your self in the yoga of sannyasa, ³⁵² freed, you will attain me. I am the same to all beings. I have no one I hate, nor anyone I love. But those who worship me with devotion, they are established in me. And I am established in them. Even if the most evil of persons worships me single-mindedly, he should be thought of as a righteous person. Because his resolve is correct. Swiftly, he ³⁵³ becomes a righteous person and attains eternal peace. O Kounteya! My worshippers are never destroyed. This you can vouch for. O Partha! Even those who are of evil birth, women, vaishyas and shudras, ³⁵⁴ having sought refuge in me, they will certainly attain supreme liberation. There is no need to repeat ³⁵⁵ about pure brahmanas and devoted rajarshis. This earth is temporary and leads to unhappiness. Therefore, having attained, ³⁵⁶ worship me. With mind immersed in me, become my devotee, my worshipper and one who offers obeisance to me. In this way, with your atman united in me as the refuge, you will attain me alone.””

CHAPTER 892(32) ³⁵⁷

““The lord said, ‘O mighty-armed one! Listen once more to my supreme words. These are pleasing you and for your welfare, I am saying this. The host of gods does not know of my origin. ³⁵⁸ Nor do the maharshis. Because, in every way, I am the original cause of the gods and the great sages. He who knows me as without origin and without birth and as the greatest lord of the worlds, is freed from delusion among men ³⁵⁹ and freed from all sins. Intellect, knowledge, freedom from delusion, forgiveness, truthfulness, control over the senses, control over thoughts, happiness, unhappiness, creation, destruction, fear and freedom from fear, non-violence, equality, ³⁶⁰ satisfaction, austerity, donations, fame and lack of fame—all these states of beings indeed owe their origin to me. The seven great sages, ³⁶¹ the four who came before them ³⁶² and the Manus

³⁶³ owe their origin to me and were created from my resolution. In this world, everything is descended from them. There is no doubt that he who truly knows my divine yoga ³⁶⁴ is united with unwavering yoga. ³⁶⁵ I am the origin of everything. From me is everything instituted. Knowing this, the wise, immersed in devotion, worship me. Minds on me, lives in me, explaining my nature to each other, and always conversing, ³⁶⁶ they ³⁶⁷ attain satisfaction and happiness. I provide that kind of yoga of intellect to those who are always immersed in me and lovingly worship me. Using that, they attain me. With compassion towards them, I am always established inside them as the bright lamp of knowledge, destroying the darkness born out of ignorance.’

“Arjuna said, ‘You are the supreme brahman, the supreme abode and supreme sacredness. You are the eternal purusha, self-resplendent, the predecessor of the gods, without birth and omnipresent. All the sages and Devarshi Narada ³⁶⁸ and Asita-Devala ³⁶⁹ and Vyasa ³⁷⁰ describe you thus. You have yourself also told me this. O Keshava! I accept all that you are telling me as true. Because, O Lord, even the gods and the demons do not know your manifestations. ³⁷¹ O supreme being! O creator of beings! O lord of beings! O lord of the gods! O lord of the universe! You alone know your own self through your own self. Whatever divine powers you use to pervade these worlds, you alone are capable of relating to me in detail those self-resplendent divine powers. O yogi! How can I always think of you and know you? O illustrious one! In what objects can you be thought of by me? O Janardana! Tell me once again, in detail, about the power of your yoga. Because, hearing your immortal words, I am not satisfied.’

“The lord said, ‘O foremost among the Kuru lineage! All right. I will tell you about my main divine manifestations. Because there is no end to the detail of my powers. ³⁷² O Gudakesha! I am the atman established in the heart of all beings. It is I who am the origin, the middle and also the end of all beings. ³⁷³ I am Vishnu among the adityas. ³⁷⁴ I am the radiant

sun among the shining bodies. I am Marichi among the maruts. ³⁷⁵ I am the moon among the stars. ³⁷⁶ I am the Sama Veda among the Vedas. ³⁷⁷ Among the gods, I am Vasava. I am the mind among the senses. And in beings, I am the consciousness. I am Shankara among the *rudras*. ³⁷⁸ I am Kubera among the yakshas and the rakshas. ³⁷⁹ I am fire among the *vasus*. ³⁸⁰ I am Meru. ³⁸¹ O Partha! Know me to be Brihaspati, ³⁸² foremost among the priests. Among generals, I am Skanda. ³⁸³ Among waterbodies, I am the ocean. Among great sages, I am Bhrigu. ³⁸⁴ Among words, I am the single syllable. ³⁸⁵ Among yajnas, I am *japa* yajna. ³⁸⁶ Among immovable objects, I am the Himalayas. Among all trees, I am the fig tree. ³⁸⁷ And among divine sages, I am Narada. Among gandharvas I am Chitraratha. ³⁸⁸ And among those who have attained liberation, I am the sage Kapila. ³⁸⁹ Among horses, know me to be Uccaishrava, arising from the immortal nectar. ³⁹⁰ Among great elephants Airavata and among men, the king. Among weapons I am vajra. ³⁹¹ Among cows I become *kamadhenu*. ³⁹² I become Kandarpa for procreation. ³⁹³ And among snakes I am Vasuki. ³⁹⁴ Among serpents I am Ananta. Among those who inhabit the water, I am Varuna. ³⁹⁵ Among the ancestors I am Aryama. ³⁹⁶ Among those who control, ³⁹⁷ I am Yama. Among demons I am Prahlada. ³⁹⁸ Among those who devour, ³⁹⁹ I am time. And I am the lion ⁴⁰⁰ among animals. Among birds, I am the son of Vinata. ⁴⁰¹ Among those that purify, I am the wind. Among those who bear weapons, I am Rama. Among fish, I am the shark. ⁴⁰² And among rivers, I am Jahnavi. ⁴⁰³ O Arjuna! I alone am the beginning, the end and the middle of all created objects. Among all forms of knowledge, I am knowledge of the self. Among debaters, *vada*. ⁴⁰⁴ Among letters, I am the letter ‘A’. Among different forms of *samasa*, I am dvanda. ⁴⁰⁵ Indeed I am indestructible

time. My face is in every direction. I am the controller of destiny. I am death that robs everything. And I am the origin of the future. Among women, I am fame, prosperity, speech, memory, intellect, fortitude and forgiveness. In the Sama Veda, I am *brihat sama*.⁴⁰⁶ Among metres, I am *gayatri*. Among months, I am *Margashirsha*.⁴⁰⁷ Among seasons, I am *kusumakara*.⁴⁰⁸ I am gambling among those who wish to cheat.⁴⁰⁹ I am energy in the energetic. I am victory, perseverance, I am the *sattva* quality in the righteous. I am Vasudeva among the *Vrishnis*. I am *Dhananjaya* among those of the *Pandu* clan. I am *Vyasa* among the sages. Among the wise, I am the wise *Ushanasa*.⁴¹⁰ I am *danda* among those who rule.⁴¹¹ I am strategy for those who wish to win. Among secret subjects, I am silence. I am knowledge among the wise. O Arjuna! Whatever is the seed of origin of every being, that is me alone. There is nothing moveable or immovable that can come into being without me. O scorcher of foes! There is no end to my divine glory. Whatever I have stated of this expanse of glory is only a brief indication. Know that whatever object is glorious, prosperous or indeed extremely powerful, that has originated from a part of my energy. O Arjuna! But what is the need to know all these details? I am established, holding up this entire universe with only a part of me.’”

CHAPTER 893(33)⁴¹²

“Arjuna said, ‘Out of compassion for me, the extremely secret *adhyatma* knowledge that you have stated has destroyed this delusion of mine. O one with eyes like lotus leaves! From you I have heard in detail about the creation and destruction of all beings, and also your eternal greatness. O supreme lord! What you have said about yourself is indeed like that. O supreme being! I wish to see your divine form. O lord! If you think that I am worthy of seeing that, then, O lord of yoga, show me your indestructible self.’

“The lord said, ‘O Partha! Behold my divine multi-dimensioned, multi-hued, multi-shaped hundreds and thousands of forms. O descendant of the

Bharata lineage! See the adityas, the vasus, the rudras, the *ashvinis* and the maruts. ⁴¹³ See the many wonderful things you have never seen before. O Gudakesha! In my body, in one place, see the entire universe, with all that is moveable and immovable. Also see today, whatever else you want to see. You will not be able to see me with your own eyes. Therefore, I am giving you divine sight. Witness my divine glory.”

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! Having said this, Hari, the great lord of yoga, then showed Partha the divine and supreme form—with many mouths and eyes, with many miraculous things to see, adorned in many resplendent ornaments, with many divine weapons raised, with divine garlands and clothing, anointed with divine fragrances, extremely wonderful everywhere, resplendent, infinite, with faces in every direction. If the brilliance of a thousand suns simultaneously rises in the sky, then that brilliance can rival the brilliance of that great soul. Then Pandava saw the entire universe in one place, divided into many parts, in that great god of gods’ body. Then, amazed and with his body hair standing up, Dhananjaya bowed down before the god with his head lowered and, with joined palms, said...

“Arjuna said, ‘O lord! In your body I see all the gods and all the different types of beings, the divine sages and all the serpents and the creator Brahma, seated on a lotus. O lord of the universe! O universal form! I see you, with many arms, many stomachs, many faces and many eyes, everywhere. And I don’t see an end, a middle or a beginning to you. With a crown, with a mace, with the chakra, resplendent everywhere, like a mass of energy, impossible to see, ⁴¹⁴ brilliant like the burning fire and the sun, impossible to measure, I see you in every direction. I have no doubt that you are eternal and supreme and the only thing worth knowing. You are the supreme refuge of this universe. You are the indestructible and original being, the upholder of ancient dharma. I behold you without beginning, middle and end, infinite in strength, with uncountable arms, the sun and moon in your eyes, face like ignited fire, scorching this universe with your energy. O great soul! This space between the sky and the earth is

pervaded only by you. The directions are also pervaded. Witnessing this miraculous and terrible form, the three worlds are suffering. ⁴¹⁵ That array of gods is entering you alone. Some are frightened and, with joined palms, are craving protection. The array of great sages and pure souls are uttering words of pacification and are worshipping you, with pure and profound prayers. The rudras, the adityas, the vasus and the *saddhyas*, ⁴¹⁶ the *vishvadevas*, ⁴¹⁷ the ashvinis and the maruts, those who partake warm food, ⁴¹⁸ the gandharvas, the yakshas, the asuras and arrays of the siddhas ⁴¹⁹ are all gazing at you with amazement. O mighty-armed one! The worlds are terrified, and so am I, at witnessing your great form, with many faces and eyes, many stomachs, many arms, thighs and feet, fearsome with many teeth. O Vishnu! Touching the sky, resplendent, multi-hued, mouths stretched out, eyes large and fiery—seeing you, I am frightened and I cannot maintain my fortitude and peace. Seeing your several faces, fearsome with teeth and blazing like the fire of destruction, I have lost my sense of direction. I cannot find happiness. O lord of the gods! O refuge of the universe! Have mercy. All those sons of Dhritarashtra, with the collected kings, and Bhishma, Drona and that son of a suta ⁴²⁰ and the chief warriors on our side are dashing into your fearsome mouth with the terrible teeth. Some of them can be seen, heads smashed and attached to the joints of the teeth. Truly, like many currents in rivers head towards and enter the ocean, thus, those warriors of this earth are entering your mouths, flaming in all directions. As moths driven to destruction speedily enter a blazing fire, like that, these people are also swiftly entering your mouths, for destruction. O Vishnu! In all directions, you are repeatedly licking, having swallowed all the worlds ⁴²¹ with your flaming mouths. Your fierce resplendence is scorching, having filled the universe with energy. Who are you? Tell me, you of the fierce form! I bow down before you. O great god! Be merciful. I wish to know you, you who are the beginning. Because I do not understand your inclination.’

“The lord said, ‘I am the terrible destroyer ⁴²² of people. I am now about to destroy these people. Even without you, ⁴²³ all the warriors in the opposing army formations will not exist. O Savyasachi! Therefore, arise! Attain fame. Triumph over enemies and enjoy the undisputed kingdom. These have already been slain by me. You will only be the instrument. Kill Drona and Bhishma and Jayadratha and Karna and the other brave warriors also, already killed by me. Don’t be apprehensive. You will be able to triumph over enemies in battle. Fight.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “Hearing these words of Keshava’s, the trembling Kiriti ⁴²⁴ joined his palms and saluting Krishna, again said in a faltering tone, bowing down in fear...

“Arjuna said, ‘O Hrishikesha! It is natural that the universe is extremely delighted to hear of your glory and is attracted to you, the rakshas are scared and flee in all directions and all the arrays of siddhas bow down. O great soul! O infinite! O lord of the gods! O refuge of the universe! You are greater than Brahma and the original agent. Why should you not be saluted? The manifest and the unmanifest and the indestructible ⁴²⁵ that is beyond, is also you. You come before the gods. You are the eternal being. You are the abode of the universe after destruction. You are the knower, that which is to be known and the supreme abode. By you is the universe pervaded and you are infinite in form. You are Vayu, ⁴²⁶ Yama, ⁴²⁷ Agni, ⁴²⁸ Varuna, ⁴²⁹ Shashanka, ⁴³⁰ Prajapati ⁴³¹ and the great-grandfather. ⁴³² I salute you a thousand times. And again salute you. And yet again salute you. I salute you in front and from the back. I salute you everywhere, in every direction. O possessor of infinite energy and unlimited strength! You pervade everything. Therefore, you are everything. Without knowing your glory and also this, ⁴³³ inadvertently and in affection, thinking of you as a friend, expressions like O Krishna, O Yadava, O friend, have been rudely used by me. O Achyuta! ⁴³⁴ At times of sport, sleeping, sitting or eating, alone or in front of other equals, in jest, you have faced irreverence, and for that, I crave forgiveness from

you, whose power is beyond thought. O infinite power! You are the father, worshipped, teacher and also the greatest of all movable and immovable objects in the worlds. In the three worlds, there is no one equal to you. Where can there be someone greater than you? O god! For that reason, I prostrate my body and bow before this revered god, craving your blessings. Like a son's by the father, a friend's by a friend and a lover's by the beloved, forgive. ⁴³⁵ O god! Having seen that which has not been witnessed before, I am delighted. But again, my mind is disturbed by fear. Therefore, show me your earlier form. O lord of the gods! O abode of the universe! Be merciful. I wish to see your earlier form, crowned, with a mace and chakra ⁴³⁶ in hand. O thousand-armed one! O universal form! Become manifest in your four-armed form.' ⁴³⁷

“The lord said, ‘O Arjuna! Having been pleased, with my powers of yoga, I have shown this resplendent, infinite, primeval and supreme universal form. Apart from you, this has not been seen by anyone before. O great hero of the Kuru lineage! Not through the Vedas, yajnas, study, nor through donations, nor even action or severe austerities, can this form of mine be witnessed by anyone other than you in this human world. Be not fearful at witnessing this fierce form of mine. Be not bewildered. Overcoming fear, with a happy mind, may you behold that, my earlier form.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “Having said this, Vasudeva again showed Arjuna his natural form. Having again assumed his peaceful form, the great soul assured the scared Arjuna.

“Arjuna said, ‘O Janardana! Having seen your peaceful and human form, my mind is now calmed and I am in control of my senses. I have become normal.’

“The lord said, ‘The form of mine that you have seen is difficult to witness. The gods themselves are always desirous of seeing this form. Not through the Vedas, nor austerities, nor donations, nor even yajnas, is it possible to see me in the form that you have seen me in. O scorcher of foes! O Arjuna! It is only through single-minded devotion that this form of

mine can be truly known or seen, or it becomes possible to get immersed in me. O Pandava! He who undertakes action for my sake, is attached to me, is devoted to me, is detached and without enmity towards all beings, attains me.’”

CHAPTER 894(34) ⁴³⁸

“Arjuna said, ‘In this way, there are devotees who are always immersed in you and worship you and there are those who think of the unmanifest and the indestructible. ⁴³⁹ Who among these is the best yogi?’ ⁴⁴⁰

“The lord said, ‘Those who worship me, with minds fixed on me and always united in me with supreme devotion, in my view, they are the best yogis. But those who worship the indestructible, indescribable, unmanifest, omnipresent, unthinkable, original, ⁴⁴¹ immovable and constant, controlling properly the senses and looking upon everything equally, acting for the welfare of all beings, they only attain me. Those who wish to immerse their minds in the unmanifest, find it more difficult. Because those who possess bodies ⁴⁴² attain the goal of the unmanifest with great perseverance. ⁴⁴³ O Partha! Those who offer all action to me, are devoted to me and with single-minded yoga, meditate on me and worship me with minds rendered unto me, I become swiftly their rescuer from this mortal world that is like an ocean. Establish your mind in me alone. ⁴⁴⁴ Fix your intellect on me. After that, ⁴⁴⁵ there is no doubt that you will live with me alone. O Dhananjaya! If you cannot steady your mind and fix it on me, then practise yoga ⁴⁴⁶ and wish to attain me. If you don’t succeed in the practice, then do only my deeds. ⁴⁴⁷ Even if you do acts for my pleasure, you attain liberation. If however, you are unable to perform these deeds also, then control your mind, give up attachment to the fruits of all action and seek refuge in the yoga that is mine. ⁴⁴⁸ Knowledge is superior to practice. Meditation is superior to knowledge. Giving up attachment to the fruits of action is superior to meditation.

After renunciation, tranquillity is attained. ⁴⁴⁹ He who has no hatred for all beings, is friendly and also displays compassion, is without sense of ego, without pride, regards happiness and unhappiness in the same way and is forgiving, is always satisfied, a yogi and controlled in mind, firm in resolution ⁴⁵⁰ and with mind and intellect immersed in me, such a devotee of mine is dear to me. He from whom other people are not disturbed and he who is not disturbed by other people and he who is free from delight, dissatisfaction, ⁴⁵¹ fear and concern, is dear to me. Without desire, ⁴⁵² pure, enterprising, neutral, without pain and one who has renounced all fruit, ⁴⁵³ such a devotee is dear to me. He who is not delighted, nor hates, he who does not sorrow, nor desires, he who has given up good and evil, ⁴⁵⁴ such a devotee is dear to me. Equal between friend and enemy, and respect and insult, equal between cold and warmth, happiness and unhappiness and without all attachment, like between criticism and praise, restrained in speech, ⁴⁵⁵ satisfied with whatever is obtained, without habitation ⁴⁵⁶ and controlled in mind, such a devoted man is dear to me. Those who are devoted and look upon me as the supreme goal and worship according to this immortal dharma mentioned earlier, such devotees are extremely dear to me.’’’

CHAPTER 895(35) ⁴⁵⁷

“‘The lord said, ‘O Kounteya! This body is known as the *kshetra*. ⁴⁵⁸ He who knows this is called the *kshetrajna* by those who have the knowledge. ⁴⁵⁹ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In every field, know me to be the *kshetrajna*. My view is that knowledge about *kshetra* and *kshetrajna* is knowledge. ⁴⁶⁰ Briefly, hear from me what is that *kshetra*, its nature and its transformation, and cause and effect within it. Also that ⁴⁶¹ and its power. The rishis have sung this ⁴⁶² in different metres in several diverse ways. The definite logical arguments are also there in the Brahmasutra

passages. ⁴⁶³ The great elements, ⁴⁶⁴ the ego, the intellect and the unmanifest, ⁴⁶⁵ the ten organs of sense ⁴⁶⁶ and the single one ⁴⁶⁷ and the objects of the five senses, ⁴⁶⁸ desire, hatred, happiness, unhappiness, combination, ⁴⁶⁹ consciousness, patience, these together are said to be the kshetra and its transformations. Lack of ego, lack of arrogance, lack of injury, ⁴⁷⁰ forgiveness, humility, servitude towards teachers, purity, single-mindedness ⁴⁷¹ and control over the self, detachment towards gratification of the senses and lack of vanity, indifference towards unhappy travails like birth, death, aging and disease, non-attachment, ⁴⁷² no sense of belonging in wife, son and home, always equality in mind whether good or evil results, faithfulness in devotion to me, fixedness and non-deviation in yoga, habitation in secluded spots, aversion to crowds, devotion to knowledge about the atman and search for true knowledge—these are known as knowledge. Anything opposed is ignorance. I will state that which is to be known. Knowing that, attains immortality. ⁴⁷³ That brahman, without origin, is my form. It is said, both eternal and transient. ⁴⁷⁴ That ⁴⁷⁵ has hands and feet everywhere, eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, and ears everywhere, is established in everything in this world. Manifest in the qualities of all the senses, but without any senses, alone, like the abode of everything, without qualities and the preserver of all qualities. ⁴⁷⁶ That is outside all beings and yet inside them, moving and unmoving, beyond knowledge because of subtleness, far and yet near. That is indivisible, but exists in every being in divided form. Know ⁴⁷⁷ as the preserver, destroyer and creator of all beings. That is the light of all bright bodies. Said to be beyond darkness. Knowledge, that which is to be known and attainable through knowledge, is established in the heart of everything. ⁴⁷⁸ Briefly, kshetra and that which is knowledge, and to be known, have been stated. Knowing this, my devotee attains my nature. ⁴⁷⁹ Know both prakriti and purusha to be without origin. And know transformations and the qualities ⁴⁸⁰ to result from prakriti. ⁴⁸¹ Prakriti

is said to be the reason behind cause and effect, ⁴⁸² purusha said to be ⁴⁸³ for happiness and unhappiness in enjoyment, because purusha is established in prakriti and enjoys prakriti's qualities. ⁴⁸⁴ And its ⁴⁸⁵ good and evil birth is because of its association with these qualities. The supreme being in this body is known as one who witnesses, one who allows, one who sustains, one who enjoys, the supreme lord and the paramatman. He who knows the nature of purusha, and of prakriti, with the qualities, whatever be the position he is in, will not be reborn. Some, through meditation, see the atman in the atman with the atman. ⁴⁸⁶ Others use sankhya yoga ⁴⁸⁷ and still others use karma yoga. And others, failing to know, ⁴⁸⁸ hear from others and worship. Even they, who are devoted to hearing, transcend death. O best of the Bharata lineage! Whatever movable and immovable objects are created, know them to result from the link between kshetra and kshetrajna. He truly sees who beholds the indestructible supreme lord equally in all beings, while everything else is destructible. He who sees the great lord equally established in everything, he doesn't kill the atman with the atman, ⁴⁸⁹ and therefore, attains supreme liberation. He who perceives all action as being performed by prakriti and the atman as a non-agent, he truly beholds. When he sees the different aspects of beings as established in one ⁴⁹⁰ and also everything manifested from there, he attains the brahman. O Kounteya! Because it is without origin and without qualities, this paramatman is unchanging and although based in the body, does nothing. It is not attached. ⁴⁹¹ As the sky that is everywhere is not attached because of its subtlety, like that, the atman is not attached, though it is in every body. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Just as a single sun lights up the entire world, like that, a single *kshetri* lights up all kshetras. ⁴⁹² Those who, through their eyes of knowledge, know the difference between kshetra and kshetrajna in this way and freedom from beings and prakriti, ⁴⁹³ they attain the supreme goal. ”””

“The lord said, ‘I am again stating the excellent and supreme out of all types of knowledge. Knowing that, all the sages are freed from this ⁴⁹⁵ and attain supreme liberation. Seeking refuge in this knowledge and attaining my true nature, they are not born at the time of creation, nor suffer at the time of destruction. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The great brahman ⁴⁹⁶ is my womb. Into that, I place the seed. ⁴⁹⁷ And from that, all the beings are created. O Kounteya! The different forms that are created in all wombs, the great brahman ⁴⁹⁸ is like their mother ⁴⁹⁹ and I am the father who provides the seed. O mighty-armed one! The qualities sattva, rajas and tamas, generated from nature, bind the indestructible atman in the body. O sinless one! Among these, ⁵⁰⁰ sattva is shining because it is pure and is without sin, but ties down the atman because of attachment to happiness and knowledge. ⁵⁰¹ O Kounteya! Know rajas to be based on desire and the origin of thirst and attachment. ⁵⁰² That ⁵⁰³ binds the atman ⁵⁰⁴ firmly because of attachment to action. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Know tamas to be born from ignorance and the source of delusion in every being. That ⁵⁰⁵ binds firmly through error, ⁵⁰⁶ sloth and sleep. ⁵⁰⁷ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Sattva attaches to happiness and rajas attaches to action. Tamas veils knowledge and attaches to errors. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Sattva overcomes rajas and tamas and becomes strong, rajas, sattva and tamas, and tamas, sattva and rajas. ⁵⁰⁸ Know that when the light of knowledge is ignited in all the gates of this body, ⁵⁰⁹ it is only then that sattva becomes strong. O best of the Bharata lineage! Greed, ⁵¹⁰ inclination, beginnings of action, ⁵¹¹ restlessness and desire—these are created when rajas becomes strong. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Darkness, lack of enterprise, inadvertence and delusion—these are created when tamas becomes strong. If a being dies when sattva becomes strong, then he

attains the shining ⁵¹² world reserved for those who have the supreme knowledge. Death when rajas become strong leads to rebirth as someone addicted to action. And death when tamas, ⁵¹³ leads to rebirth as subhuman species. ⁵¹⁴ It has been said that sattva-type action has the fruit of pure happiness, rajas-type has the fruit of unhappiness and tamas-type has the fruit of ignorance. From sattva, wisdom results, and from rajas, greed, and from tamas, only inadvertence, delusion and ignorance result. Those with a preponderance of sattva ascend above. ⁵¹⁵ Those with rajas stay in the middle. ⁵¹⁶ Those with despicable tamas qualities, descend below. ⁵¹⁷ When the seer doesn't see any agent other than the qualities and knows that which is beyond the qualities, he attains my nature. ⁵¹⁸ When the being transcends the three qualities that are the origin of the body, he attains immortality, free from birth, death, old age and unhappiness.'

“Arjuna said, ‘O lord! From what signs does one know one who has transcended? What is his conduct? And how does he transcend these three qualities?’

“The lord said, ‘O Pandava! He who is engaged in knowledge and inclination and delusion and yet does not hate, nor desire if these are withdrawn. ⁵¹⁹ He is established in indifference and the qualities don't disturb him. Knowing the action of the qualities to be of this form, he is steady and doesn't waver. Equal between happiness and unhappiness, established in himself, ⁵²⁰ equal between earth, stone and gold, similar in treatment of the loved and the hated, tranquil, similar between praise and censure. He who treats respect and insult alike, friend and enemy alike and discards all beginnings of action, ⁵²¹ he is said to have transcended the qualities.’ He who worships me single-mindedly and with unwavering devotion, he transcends these qualities and is worthy of attaining the state of the brahman. Because I am the embodiment of the brahman—

indestructible, immortal, ⁵²² and also of eternal dharma and absolute bliss.””” ⁵²³

CHAPTER 897(37)

““The lord said, ‘They say the ashvattha tree, ⁵²⁴ with a root above and branches below, is indestructible. He who knows that its leaves are the metres ⁵²⁵ knows the truth. Specially nurtured by the gunas, with objects ⁵²⁶ as its shoots, its branches extend upwards and downwards. In the world of men, its rootlings ⁵²⁷ stretch downwards, the cause of action. In this, ⁵²⁸ this form ⁵²⁹ is not felt, nor the end, nor the beginning. Nor even its establishment. Slicing the thick root of this ashvattha with the weapon of firm detachment, thereafter, one must seek that goal, the attainment of which means no return, ⁵³⁰ stating, “I seek refuge in that original being, from whom this eternal process is created,” without pride and delusion, having conquered the fault of attachment, constant in the knowledge of the atman, having restrained desire, freed from the opposites of happiness and unhappiness, the wise go to that indestructible goal. Attaining that, there is no return. The sun cannot light that, ⁵³¹ nor the moon, nor fire. That is my supreme abode. Indeed, part of my eternal form is established as beings in nature and attracts the mind and six ⁵³² senses to the world of beings. Like the wind carries away fragrance from receptacles, ⁵³³ the lord, ⁵³⁴ when it discards one body and attains another one, takes these ⁵³⁵ with it and leaves. This ⁵³⁶ is established in the ears, the eyes, touch, the tongue, the nose and also the mind and enjoys objects. The deluded do not see the establishment and also the enjoyment and progress, with the qualities as attributes. ⁵³⁷ Those with eyes of wisdom, see this. Careful ⁵³⁸ yogis, established in the atman, see this. Despite care, those who are not established in the atman, and are without consciousness, don’t see this. The energy in the sun that lights up the entire world, that in the moon and

that too in the fire, know that energy to be mine. I enter the earth and hold up the beings with my energy. As the watery moon, I nourish all the herbs. ⁵³⁹ I am established in the bodies of beings as the fire of digestion. I mingle with the prana and apana breath ⁵⁴⁰ and digest the four types of food. ⁵⁴¹ I am established in the hearts of all beings. I result in memory and knowledge and their lack. Indeed, it is I who am the knowledge of the Vedas and the origin of Vedanta. And I am the knower of the Vedas. ⁵⁴² The destructible and the indestructible, these two purushas exist in the world. All these beings are destructible. ⁵⁴³ The fixed is known as the indestructible. ⁵⁴⁴ That apart, there is a supreme purusha known as the paramatman, who enters the three worlds and sustains them—the indestructible Lord. Because I am beyond destruction and superior even to the indestructible, therefore, I am known as the supreme being ⁵⁴⁵ in this world ⁵⁴⁶ and in the Vedas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Without delusion, he who knows me as the supreme being, he is omniscient and worships me in every way. O pure one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus, this extremely secret knowledge has been related by me. This understanding leads to knowledge and accomplishment.””” ⁵⁴⁷

CHAPTER 898(38) ⁵⁴⁸

““The lord said, ‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Absence of fear, pureness of heart, ⁵⁴⁹ steadiness in jnana yoga, ⁵⁵⁰ donation, and control, ⁵⁵¹ yajnas, self-study, ⁵⁵² practice of austerities and simplicity, ⁵⁵³ absence of injury to others, truthfulness, lack of anger, renunciation, tranquility, lack of criticism of others, compassion towards beings, lack of avarice, gentleness, sense of shame, ⁵⁵⁴ steadfastness, energy, forgiveness, perseverance, cleanliness, absence of hatred, absence of ego—these belong to the person born towards divine wealth. ⁵⁵⁵ O Partha! Arrogance, insolence, egoism, anger, cruelty and ignorance—these belong

to birth towards demonic wealth. Divine wealth is for liberation. Demonic wealth is for bondage. O Pandava! Do not sorrow. You have been born towards divine wealth. O Partha! In this world, two types of beings are created, divine and demonic. The divine has been stated in detail. Hear from me about the demonic. Demonic people do not know about inclination and disinclination. ⁵⁵⁶ In them, there is no purity nor righteousness, nor even truthfulness. They say the world is full of falsehood, ⁵⁵⁷ without basis, ⁵⁵⁸ without a lord, created without continuity ⁵⁵⁹ and with no reason other than to satisfy desire. Resorting to such views, with distorted minds, little intelligence and cruel action, they perform evil deeds. They are born to destroy the world. Seeking refuge in insatiable desires, deluded with a sense of insolence, pride and arrogance, accepting search of the untrue ⁵⁶⁰ and performing impure rites, they act. Resorting to immeasurable thoughts till the time of destruction, ⁵⁶¹ convinced certainly that the enjoyment of desire is supreme, tied down with the noose of a hundred hopes, prone to lust and anger and accepting evil means for the sake of desire gratification, they wish to accumulate wealth. Today I have gained this. I will get that desired object later. I have this and again that wealth will also be mine. This enemy has been killed by me. I will also kill the others. I am the lord, I am the enjoyer. I am the successful, strong and happy. I am wealthy and of noble descent. Who is there equal to me? I will perform yajnas, I will donate. ⁵⁶² I will pleasure myself. Deluded by ignorance in this way, minds distracted by many thoughts, caught in the net of delusion, addicted to gratification of desires, they are hurled into impure hell. Self-glorifying, haughty, proud because of wealth, they insolently perform unsanctioned rites that are yajnas only in name. Resorting to vanity, strength, insolence, desire and anger, they hate me in their own bodies and in the bodies of others and are disfavoured. In this world, I hurl those hateful, cruel, evil and worst among men into demonic births, ⁵⁶³ several times. O Kounteya! From birth to birth, the deluded don't attain me and obtaining demonic births, go

down even further. ⁵⁶⁴ Desire, anger and avarice—these are the three types of doors to hell and destroyers of the atman. Give up these three. O Kounteya! The man who is freed from these three dark doors and follows that which is good for the atman, thereafter attains the supreme goal. He who deviates from the prescription of the shastras ⁵⁶⁵ and acts as he desires like doing, that person doesn't attain liberation or happiness or the supreme goal. Therefore, in deciding what should be done and what should not be done, the shastras are your test. In this, ⁵⁶⁶ get ready to perform action knowing what the shastras prescribe.””

CHAPTER 899(39)

““Arjuna said, ‘Those who discard ⁵⁶⁷ the prescriptions of the shastras, but worship ⁵⁶⁸ with recourse to faith, what is their devotion like? Is it sattva, rajas or tamas?’

““The lord said, ‘According to their nature, people show three kinds of faith—sattva-type, rajas-type and tamas-type. Listen to this. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Everyone’s faith follows his inner nature. This being ⁵⁶⁹ is full of faith. The kind of faith one has makes the person. Those of the sattva-type worship the gods, those of the rajas-type, yakshas and rakshas. ⁵⁷⁰ The others, of the tamas-type, worship ghosts ⁵⁷¹ and devils. ⁵⁷² Those who perform terrible austerities, not sanctioned by the shastras, full of insolence and ego and deriving strength from desire and attachment, ⁵⁷³ devoid of consciousness, torture the elements in the body and also me, inside the body. ⁵⁷⁴ Know them to be driven by demonic resolution. The favoured food of all is of three types and so too, sacrifices, meditation and donations. Listen to the distinction between these. The sattva-type favour food that increases life expectancy, vitality, ⁵⁷⁵ strength, freedom from disease, happiness and joy—tasty, oily, nourishing and pleasant. The rajas-type favour food that is extremely spicy, acidic, salty, hot, pungent, dry and burning—increasing unhappiness, sorrow and

disease. The tamas-type favour food cooked a long time ago, ⁵⁷⁶ no longer succulent ⁵⁷⁷ and with a bad smell, stale ⁵⁷⁸ and tasted by others ⁵⁷⁹ —impure. The sacrifices performed according to prescribed rites, pacifying the mind, without attachment to fruits and only because such sacrifices ought to be performed, are of the sattva-type. O best of the Bharata lineage! But know sacrifices performed in search of fruits or indeed because of insolence, ⁵⁸⁰ to be of the rajas-type. Sacrifices without following prescribed rites, without donating food, without mantras, without donations and without faith, are said to be of the tamas-type. Worship of gods, brahmanas, ⁵⁸¹ teachers and the wise, purity, simplicity, brahmacharya and non-violence ⁵⁸² —these are known as physical austerities. Not uttering words that lead to anxiety, speaking the truth and that which is pleasant and leads to welfare, ⁵⁸³ and self-study ⁵⁸⁴ —these are known as verbal austerities. Tranquility of mind, lack of cruelty, reserve in speech, control of one's self, purity in attitude ⁵⁸⁵ —all these are known as mental austerities. These three types of austerities performed single-mindedly by men, without attachment to fruits and with supreme faith, are said to be of the sattva-type. Austerities performed with the objective of obtaining praise, respect or worship, and based on insolence, are said to be of the rajas-type and in this, ⁵⁸⁶ are temporary and uncertain. Austerities performed on the basis of delusion, resulting in the oppression of one's self or undertaken to destroy others, are said to be of the tamas-type. Alms donated for the sake of donation, ⁵⁸⁷ to those who have not benefited the donor, ⁵⁸⁸ and based on place, time and subject ⁵⁸⁹ —are said to be of the sattva-type. But donations for the sake of return favours or for the fruits or given unwillingly, are said to be of the rajas-type. Donations in the wrong place, at the wrong time and to the wrong subject, given without respect and disdainfully—are said to be of the tamas-type. “Om tat sat”—in these three ways, the brahman has been described in the sacred texts. From this, in the past, brahmanas and the

Vedas and yajnas have been created. Therefore, according to prescribed rites, sacrifices, donations and austerities by those who are learned in the brahman, are always undertaken after uttering “Om”. Those who desire liberation, give up desire for fruits and undertake sacrifices, donations and austerities after uttering “Tat”. O Partha! “Sat” is used to signify existence and superiority. And the word “Sat” is also used for auspicious acts. Steadfastness in sacrifices, donations and austerities is known as “Sat” and action performed towards those ends is also indeed known as “Sat”. O Partha! Sacrifices, donations and austerities and any other action, undertaken without faith, are known as the opposite of “Sat”, with nothing
590 in this world or in the afterworld.””

CHAPTER 900(40)

“Arjuna said, ‘O mighty-armed one! O Hrishikesha! O slayer of Keshi!
591 I wish to separately understand the essence of renunciation and relinquishing.’ 592

“The lord said, ‘The wise know the relinquishing of action that satisfies desires as sannyasa. The discriminating call the relinquishing of the fruits of all action *tyaga*. Some learned people say that all action is associated with evil and should be relinquished. Some others say that action like sacrifices, donations and austerities should not be relinquished. O supreme among the Bharata lineage! Listen to my decided views about that relinquishing. O tiger among men! It has been said that relinquishing is of three types. Sacrifices, donations and austerities are not to be relinquished. Those actions certainly have to be performed, because sacrifices, donations and austerities purify the hearts of the learned. O Partha! But even these actions should be performed through relinquishing attachment and fruits. 593 That is my decided and supreme view. It is not advisable to renounce indicated action. 594 Discarding this through delusion is known as tamas-type. 595 He who relinquishes action because action leads to discomfort and requires physical exertion, performs rajas-type

relinquishing. He doesn't receive the fruits from relinquishing. O Arjuna! Sattva-type relinquishing is known as that where attachment and fruits are relinquished and action is performed only because it is indicated action. Immersed in the sattva quality, steady in learning and without doubt, the relinquisher doesn't hate disagreeable action or become addicted to agreeable action. He who possesses a body cannot give up action in its entirety. Because he relinquishes fruits of action, he is known as a true relinquisher. Those who don't relinquish face three types of fruits of their action in the afterworld—bad, good and mixed. But *sannyasis* don't. ⁵⁹⁶ O mighty-armed one! In the sacred texts, ⁵⁹⁷ five reasons are described in support of performing all action. Hear these from me. The abode and also the agent, different types of instruments and different and various types of endeavour—and the fifth is the divine. ⁵⁹⁸ Whatever action, appropriate or inappropriate, a man begins through the body, the mind and speech, is caused by these five. Although this is the state of affairs, ⁵⁹⁹ he who thinks of the absolute atman as the agent, his intelligence is unrefined and that ignorant person doesn't see. ⁶⁰⁰ He who has no sense of ego and whose intelligence is unattached, even if he slays all these people, doesn't really kill and is not tied down. ⁶⁰¹ Knowledge, that which can be known and the knower, are the three impetuses behind action. ⁶⁰² The action, the instrument and the agent form the base for action. According to qualities, three types of differences in knowledge and action and the agent are described in sankhya. ⁶⁰³ Listen properly to that too. That which in all beings, in differentiated form, sees the undifferentiated and indestructible substance, ⁶⁰⁴ know that to be sattva-type knowledge. But the knowledge through which one sees in all beings, in differentiated form, differentiated and separate substances, know that to be rajas-type knowledge. But that which is attached to a single action, ⁶⁰⁵ is illogical, trivial and without true knowledge, that is known as tamas-type. ⁶⁰⁶ Action where fruits have been relinquished, without attachment, without love or hate, performed

only because it is indicated, is known as sattva-type. ⁶⁰⁷ Again, action undertaken, with great difficulty, by those with desire for fruits or with a sense of ego, is known as rajas-type. Action begun under delusion, without consideration of consequences, destruction, injury ⁶⁰⁸ and one's own capabilities, is known as tamas-type. An agent who is without attachment, without sense of ego, patient and enthusiastic, equal in attitude towards success and failure, is known as sattva-type. An agent who is attached, desirous of fruits of action, avaricious, injurious, ⁶⁰⁹ impure and swayed by joy and sorrow, is known as rajas-type. An agent who is not steady, vulgar, ⁶¹⁰ insolent, fraudulent, disrespectful, ⁶¹¹ lazy, despondent and procrastinating is known as tamas-type. O Dhananjaya! According to quality of intellect and perseverance, there are three types of differences. Listen to what is being said, separately and comprehensively. O Partha! The intellect ⁶¹² that knows inclination and disinclination, right action and wrong, fear and freedom from fear, bondage and liberation, is sattva-type. O Partha! The intellect through which one does not correctly understand dharma and adharma and right action and wrong, is rajas-type. O Partha! The intellect through which one thinks evil action is righteous, and in every way thinks the opposite, ⁶¹³ shrouded in ignorance, that is tamas-type. O Partha! The perseverance through which one uses unwavering yoga to focus the functions of the mind, the breath of life and the senses, that perseverance is sattva-type. O Partha! O Arjuna! The perseverance through which dharma, artha and kama are sought and according to the area, fruits desired, is known as rajas-type. O Partha! The perseverance through which the misguided person doesn't discard dreaming, ⁶¹⁴ fear, sorrow, despondency and ego, is known as tamas-type. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Now hear from me about the three types of happiness. Where happiness comes from gradual practice and there is an end to unhappiness, that which is initially like poison but at the end like ambrosia, based on the tranquility of one's intellect focused on the atman, that is known as sattva-type. That which comes from

association with objects and the senses and is initially like ambrosia but at the end like poison, that happiness is said to be rajas-type. The happiness that, at the beginning and at the end, binds and deludes the atman and that which is created from sleep, sloth and inadvertence, ⁶¹⁵ is known as tamas-type. On earth, in heaven and even among the gods, there doesn't exist anything that is free from these three qualities generated from nature.

““O scorcher of foes! The actions ⁶¹⁶ of brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and also shudras are separately segregated in accordance with qualities that result from their natures. Control over the mind, control over the senses, meditation, purity, forgiveness, simplicity, knowledge, self-realization and indeed faith are natural actions for brahmanas. Valour, bravery, perseverance, dexterity, willingness to fight, generosity and capacity to rule ⁶¹⁷ are natural actions for kshatriyas. Agriculture, preservation of cattle and trade are natural actions for vaishyas. Servitude is natural action for shudras. A man who faithfully follows his indicated course of action, attains liberation. Listen to how liberation is obtained by following one's indicated course of action. Through his own action, man obtains liberation by worshipping him who is the origin of beings and their endeavour, and him who pervades all this. ⁶¹⁸ Even when performed imperfectly, svadharma ⁶¹⁹ is superior to someone else's dharma, performed well. Sin does not result if one's natural action is undertaken. O Kounteya! Natural action should not be discarded, even if it is tainted. Because all action is tainted, just as fire is shrouded by smoke. He who is detached everywhere, has conquered his atman, ⁶²⁰ has overcome desire through sannyasa, ⁶²¹ attains the supreme liberation of freedom from action. O Kounteya! Learn briefly from me how one who has attained liberation attains the brahman. That is the supreme form of knowledge. United with pure intellect, controlling the atman with perseverance, discarding objects like sound and renouncing love and aversion, inhabiting a secluded place, eating little, restraining speech, body and the mind, constantly practising meditation, seeking refuge in renouncement,

discarding ego, power, insolence, desire, anger and possessions, ⁶²²
tranquil and without ego, he is fit for merging with the brahman. Tranquil
in merging with the brahman, such a person does not sorrow and does not
desire. Looking upon every being equally, he attains supreme devotion
towards me. Through devotion, he comprehends my true nature, who I am
and my different forms. Then, after knowing my true nature, enters. ⁶²³
Seeking refuge in me, he always performs all action and, through my
blessings, attains the eternal and indestructible abode. Through the mind,
offering up all action to me, devoted to me and seeking refuge in buddhi
yoga, ⁶²⁴ always immerse your mind in me. With mind immersed in me,
with my blessings, you will overcome all difficulties. But if, through a
sense of ego, you don't listen to me, you will be destroyed. Through a
sense of ego, you are thinking that you will not fight. But this resolution is
false. Nature ⁶²⁵ will compel you. O Kounteya! Whatever you don't wish
to do because of delusion, you will have to undertake in spite of that,
because you are tied down by your natural duty. O Arjuna! The lord is
established in the hearts of all beings and through maya, makes all beings
whirl, as if they are mounted on machines. ⁶²⁶ O descendant of the
Bharata lineage! In every way, seek refuge in him alone. Through his
blessings, you will attain supreme tranquility and the eternal abode. I have
explained to you this knowledge, which is the most secret of all secrets.
Having examined it completely, do what you wish to do. Listen yet again
to my supreme words, the most secret of all secrets. You are my dearly
beloved. Therefore, I am telling you what is good for you. Immerse your
mind only in me, be devoted to me, worship me, bow in obeisance before
me. I am pledging that you will attain me, because you are my beloved.
Discard all dharmas ⁶²⁷ and seek refuge only in me. I will free you from
all sins. Do not sorrow. You should not state this ⁶²⁸ to those who do not
meditate, ⁶²⁹ or are devoid of devotion or do not wish to hear. Nor to
those who show me disrespect. There is no doubt that he who explains this
most secret knowledge to my devotees, displays supreme devotion towards

me and will attain me alone. Among men, there is no one who does greater service to me. ⁶³⁰ In the world, there is no one, and there will be no one, more dear to me. And he who will study this dialogue ⁶³¹ of ours on dharma, my view is that he will worship me through jnana yoga. The man who only listens with faith and without disrespect, he too will be freed from sin and attain the worlds attained by those who are pure of deeds. O Partha! Have you listened to this with single-minded concentration? O Dhananjaya! Has your delusion of ignorance been destroyed?

“Arjuna said, ‘O Achyuta! Through your blessings, my delusion has been destroyed. I have obtained knowledge about what should be done and what shouldn’t be done. ⁶³² I am steady. I no longer suffer from doubt. I will do what you instruct.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “I have thus heard this wonderful and thrilling ⁶³³ dialogue between the great souls Vasudeva and Partha. Through the blessings of Vyasa, I have heard this supreme and secret yoga directly from Krishna, the lord of all yoga, when he stated it. O king! Remembering again and again this sacred and wonderful dialogue between Keshava and Arjuna, I have repeatedly been exhilarated. O king! Remembering that extremely wonderful universal form of Hari, I am greatly amazed and repeatedly exhilarated. Wherever ⁶³⁴ there is Krishna, the lord of yoga, and Arjuna, the wielder of the bow, exist prosperity, victory, increase in wealth and sound policy. That is my conviction.”’

Section Sixty-Four

Bhishma Vadha Parva

This parva has 3947 shlokas and seventy-seven chapters.

Chapter 901(41): 104 shlokas
Chapter 902(42): 30 shlokas
Chapter 903(43): 83 shlokas
Chapter 904(44): 48 shlokas
Chapter 905(45): 63 shlokas
Chapter 906(46): 56 shlokas
Chapter 907(47): 30 shlokas
Chapter 908(48): 70 shlokas
Chapter 909(49): 40 shlokas
Chapter 910(50): 115 shlokas
Chapter 911(51): 43 shlokas
Chapter 912(52): 22 shlokas
Chapter 913(53): 34 shlokas
Chapter 914(54): 44 shlokas
Chapter 915(55): 132 shlokas
Chapter 916(56): 28 shlokas
Chapter 917(57): 36 shlokas
Chapter 918(58): 61 shlokas
Chapter 919(59): 29 shlokas
Chapter 920(60): 79 shlokas
Chapter 921(61): 70 shlokas
Chapter 922(62): 40 shlokas
Chapter 923(63): 21 shlokas
Chapter 924(64): 18 shlokas
Chapter 925(65): 33 shlokas
Chapter 926(66): 22 shlokas
Chapter 927(67): 41 shlokas
Chapter 928(68): 33 shlokas
Chapter 929(69): 41 shlokas
Chapter 930(70): 37 shlokas

Chapter 931(71): 36 shlokas
Chapter 932(72): 26 shlokas
Chapter 933(73): 71 shlokas
Chapter 934(74): 36 shlokas
Chapter 935(75): 59 shlokas
Chapter 936(76): 19 shlokas
Chapter 937(77): 44 shlokas
Chapter 938(78): 57 shlokas
Chapter 939(79): 55 shlokas
Chapter 940(80): 51 shlokas
Chapter 941(81): 37 shlokas
Chapter 942(82): 56 shlokas
Chapter 943(83): 39 shlokas
Chapter 944(84): 43 shlokas
Chapter 945(85): 36 shlokas
Chapter 946(86): 86 shlokas
Chapter 947(87): 30 shlokas
Chapter 948(88): 38 shlokas
Chapter 949(89): 41 shlokas
Chapter 950(90): 46 shlokas
Chapter 951(91): 81 shlokas
Chapter 952(92): 79 shlokas
Chapter 953(93): 41 shlokas
Chapter 954(94): 20 shlokas
Chapter 955(95): 53 shlokas
Chapter 956(96): 51 shlokas
Chapter 957(97): 57 shlokas
Chapter 958(98): 38 shlokas
Chapter 959(99): 47 shlokas
Chapter 960(100): 37 shlokas
Chapter 961(101): 33 shlokas
Chapter 962(102): 78 shlokas
Chapter 963(103): 101 shlokas
Chapter 964(104): 58 shlokas
Chapter 965(105): 37 shlokas
Chapter 966(106): 45 shlokas
Chapter 967(107): 55 shlokas
Chapter 968(108): 41 shlokas
Chapter 969(109): 48 shlokas
Chapter 970(110): 46 shlokas
Chapter 971(111): 43 shlokas
Chapter 972(112): 138 shlokas
Chapter 973(113): 49 shlokas
Chapter 974(114): 112 shlokas
Chapter 975(115): 65 shlokas

Chapter 976(116): 51 shlokas

Chapter 977(117): 34 shlokas

Vadha means the act of killing. This section is so named because it is about the killing of Bhishma. The first ten days of the battle have Bhishma as the commander-in-chief. This section thus describes the first ten days of the battle. On the first day, Virata's son, Uttara, is killed. The second day has the Pandavas victorious, the highlight being Bhima's destruction of the Kalingas. There is a ding-dong battle on the third day, with Bhishma triumphant initially (which is when Krishna decides to take up arms), followed by Arjuna's victory. The Pandavas triumph on the fourth day and fourteen of Duryodhana's brothers are killed by Bhima. While there is a lot of fighting on the fifth day, the highlight is Bhurishrava's killing of ten of Satyaki's sons. On balance, the Pandava side is more successful on the sixth day. While there is a great deal of fighting, there is nothing that merits a special mention on the seventh day. On the eighth day, Bhima kills eight of Duryodhana's brothers. Iravat, Arjuna's son, kills several of Shakuni's brothers and is himself killed by the rakshasa Alambusa. Bhima again kills nine of Duryodhana's brothers. On the ninth day, the Pandavas eventually get the worst of it. Krishna decides to kill Bhishma and is restrained by Arjuna. The Pandavas consult Bhishma about how he may be killed and are advised to use Shikhandi. The tenth day is marked by Bhishma's downfall.

CHAPTER 901(41)

‘Sanjaya said, “At that, on seeing Dhananjaya take up Gandiva and his arrows again, the maharathas¹ let out a tremendous roar. The brave Pandavas and Somakas and their followers were delighted and blew on conch shells that had been generated from the ocean. Drums, *peshis*,² *krakachas*³ and trumpets made from the horns of cows were sounded together and there was a tumultuous sound. O lord of men! Gods, together with gandharvas, ancestors, siddhas and masses of charanas came to witness. The immensely fortunate rishis arrived, with Shatakratu at the forefront, desiring to see that great slaughter. O king! On seeing that the two armies, resembling two oceans, were ready to fight and were repeatedly moving, the brave Yudhishtira removed his armour and cast aside his supreme weapons. He swiftly descended from his chariot. Dharmaraja Yudhishtira joined his hands in salutation and advanced on foot, glancing towards the grandfather.⁴ Restrained in speech, he advanced towards the east, where the enemy forces were stationed. On seeing him

advance, Dhananjaya, Kunti's son, also swiftly descended from his chariot and followed him, together with his brothers. The illustrious Vasudeva also followed him at the rear. Extremely anxious, the foremost kings⁵ also advanced.

“Arjuna said, ‘O king! What are you doing? Why have you abandoned your brothers and are advancing on foot towards the east, where the enemy forces are stationed?’

“Bhimasena said, ‘O Indra among kings! Where are you going, having thrown your armour and weapons away? O lord of the earth! You have abandoned your brothers and are going towards the armoured enemy soldiers.’

“Nakula said, ‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You are my eldest brother. On seeing you advance in this fashion, my heart is terrified. Tell us where you are going.’

“Sahadeva said, ‘O king! A terrible fear confronts us in this battle, in the form of those whom we have to fight. Why are you advancing towards the enemy?’”

Sanjaya said, “O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Though he was addressed in this way by his brothers, Yudhishtira did not utter a single word, but continued to advance. The immensely wise and great-minded Vasudeva smiled and told them, ‘I know his intentions. He will fight with the enemy kings only after he has shown his respects to Bhishma, Drona, Goutama,⁶ Shalya and all the other seniors. It has been heard in the accounts of earlier eras, that he who shows his respects towards his seniors and revered relatives in accordance with the sacred texts, and then fights with them, is certain to be victorious in battle. That is my view.’ While Krishna was speaking, a great sound of lamentation arose in the army of Dhritarashtra's son, but the other one⁷ remained silent. On seeing Yudhishtira from a distance, Dhritarashtra's son's soldiers conversed among themselves. ‘This one is a disgrace to his lineage. The king has been frightened and is advancing towards Bhishma. Yudhishtira, together with his brothers, will seek shelter. When Dhananjaya, Pandava Vrikodara,

Nakula and Sahadeva are protectors, why is the Pandava⁸ frightened? Though he is famous on earth, he cannot have been born in a lineage of kshatriyas. His heart is frightened and he is dispirited at the prospect of battle.’ Then all the soldiers praised the Kouravas. They were delighted in their minds and waved their garments around. O lord of the earth! All the warriors censured Yudhishtira and his brothers, together with Keshava. The Kourava soldiers cried ‘Shame!’ to Yudhishtira. O lord of the earth! Then they again became completely silent. What would the king say? What would Bhishma speak in reply? What about Bhima, who prided himself in battle? What about Krishna and Arjuna? What would they say? O king! Both armies were extremely curious on account of Yudhishtira. Surrounded by his brothers, he⁹ penetrated the enemy army, full of arrows and lances, and swiftly advanced towards Bhishma. Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, was ready for battle. The Pandava king grasped his feet with both his hands and spoke these words.

“Yudhishtira said, ‘O invincible one! O father!¹⁰ We are inviting you to fight with us. O father! Grant us the permission. Give us the blessings.’

“Bhishma replied, ‘O lord of the earth! O great king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! If you had not come to me before this battle, I would have cursed you so that you might be defeated. O son! O Pandava! I am pleased with you. Fight and be victorious. Whatever else you might desire, obtain all that in this battle. O Partha! Ask for a boon. What is it that you desire? May it be such that you do not face defeat. A man is the servant of wealth. But wealth is never anyone’s servant. O great king! This is the truth. I am tied to the Kouravas because of wealth. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! That is the reason the words spoken by me are those of a eunuch.¹¹ The Kouravyas have robbed me through wealth. Other than battle, what else do you wish for?’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘O immensely wise one! Your counsel has always been directed towards my welfare. Fight on the side of the Kouravas. That has always been the boon I have asked.’

“Bhishma replied, ‘O king! O descendant of the Kuru lineage! How can I help you? What shall I do? I will fight on the side of the enemy. What else do you have to say?’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘You are invincible. How will we be able to vanquish you in battle? If you wish to provide counsel for our welfare and you find this to be desirable, tell me this.’

“Bhishma replied, ‘O Kounteya! Even if it were to be Shatakrtu himself, as long as I fight in battle, I do not see any man who can vanquish me.’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘O grandfather! I bow down before you. I am asking you to tell me about a means of victory. How can an enemy kill you in battle?’

“Bhishma replied, ‘O son! I do not see anyone who can defeat me in battle. The time for my death has not arrived. Come to me again later.’”¹²

Sanjaya said, “O descendant of the Kuru lineage! With his head lowered in homage, Yudhishtira accepted Bhishma’s words and again showed him homage. In the midst of his brothers and while all the soldiers looked on, the mighty-armed one then advanced towards the preceptor’s chariot. Having honoured Drona, he circumambulated him. The king spoke beneficial words to the invincible one. ‘O illustrious one!’¹³ I am requesting you. How can I fight without incurring a sin? O brahmana! With your permission, how can I triumph over all the enemies?’

“Drona replied, ‘O great king! Having decided to fight, if you had not come to me, I would have cursed you for your complete defeat. O Yudhishtira! O unblemished one! I have now been honoured by you and am satisfied. I grant you permission. Fight and be victorious. I will also do what you desire. Tell me what your wishes are. O great king! This being the case, other than the battle, what else do you want? A man is the servant of wealth. But wealth is never anyone’s servant. O great king! This is the truth. I am tied to the Kouravas because of wealth. That is the reason I am tied like a eunuch.’¹⁴ Other than battle, what else do you want? I will fight for the sake of the Kouravas. But my prayers will be for your triumph.’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘O brahmana! Pray for my victory and counsel me about what is good for me. Fight for the sake of the Kouravas. That is the boon I ask of you.’

“Drona replied, ‘O king! When you have Hari as an adviser, your victory is certain. I wish that you are able to vanquish your foes in battle. Where there is dharma, Krishna is there. Where there is Krishna, victory is there. O Kounteya! Go and fight. Ask me. What will I tell you?’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘O foremost among brahmanas! Listen to what I am asking and telling you. You have never been defeated. How can we vanquish you in battle?’

“Drona replied, ‘As long as I am fighting in battle, you cannot be victorious. O king! Together with your brothers, try to kill me quickly.’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘O mighty-armed one! Tell us the means whereby you can be killed. O preceptor! I am bowing down before you. I am showing you homage and asking you.’

“Drona replied, ‘O son! ¹⁵ As long as I am stationed in battle, when I am angrily fighting and am incessantly showering arrows, I do not see the enemy who can kill me. O king! Except when I am ready for death and have withdrawn myself from weapons and my senses, no warrior can kill me in battle. I tell you that this is true. I also tell you truthfully that if I hear extremely unpleasant news from a man whose words should be respected, I will abandon my weapons in battle.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! Having heard these words from Bharadvaja’s wise son, ¹⁶ he took the preceptor’s permission and went towards Sharadvat’s son. ¹⁷ Having honoured Kripa and circumambulated him, the king, skilled in the use of words, spoke these words to the one who was foremost among unassailable ones. ‘O preceptor! ¹⁸ I seek your permission to fight with you, without incurring any sin. O unblemished one! If I obtain your permission, I will defeat all enemies.’

“Kripa replied, ‘O great king! Having decided to fight, if you had not come to me, I would have cursed you for your complete defeat. A man is the servant of wealth. But wealth is never anyone’s servant. O great king!

This is the truth. I am tied to the Kouravas because of wealth. O great king! It is my view that I must fight for their sake. That is the reason I am tied like a eunuch.¹⁹ Other than battle, what else do you want?’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘O preceptor! Listen to my words. Alas! I have to ask you this.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “Having spoken these words, the king was dejected, and bereft of his senses, fell silent. But having divined what he wished to say, Goutama replied.²⁰ ‘O lord of the earth! I am incapable of being slain. Fight and be victorious. O lord of men! I am pleased that you have come. I will arise every day and pray for your victory. I am telling you this truthfully.’ O great king! Having heard these words of Goutama, the king took Kripa’s permission and went to where the king of Madra was. Having honoured Shalya, he circumambulated him. The king spoke these beneficial words to the invincible one. ‘O revered one!²¹ I seek your permission to fight with you, without incurring any sin. O great king! If I obtain your permission, I will defeat the enemies.’

“Shalya replied, ‘O great king! Having decided to fight, if you had not come to me, I would have cursed you for your defeat in battle. I am pleased with the honour you have shown me. Let it be as you desire. I grant you permission. Fight and be victorious. O brave one! Tell me anything else that you want. What can I give you? A man is the servant of wealth. But wealth is never anyone’s servant. O great king! This is the truth. I am tied to the Kouravas because of wealth. O nephew!²² I will do what you wish for and act according to your desires. I am speaking to you like a eunuch.²³ Other than battle, what else do you want?’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘O great king! Always counsel me about my supreme welfare. If you desire, fight for the enemy’s cause. That is the boon I desire.’

“Shalya replied, ‘O supreme among kings! In the present case, tell me what I can do to help. I wish to fight in the enemy’s cause. I am tied to the Kouravas because of wealth.’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘This was truly the boon I had asked for when the preparations were being made. When the son of the suta fights, you should act so as to diminish his energy.’

“Shalya replied, ‘O son of Kunti! This desire of yours will be satisfied. Go and fight as you please. I will try for your victory.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “Having taken leave of his maternal uncle, the lord of Madra, Kounteya, surrounded by his brothers, emerged from that large army. In that field of battle, Vasudeva went to Radheya.²⁴ For the sake of the Pandavas, Gada’s elder brother spoke to him.²⁵ ‘O Karna! I have heard that out of enmity towards Bhishma, you will not fight. O Radheya! Until Bhishma has been killed, come over to our side. O Radheya! If you perceive both sides to be equal, after Bhishma has been killed, go and fight again and help Dhritarashtra’s son.’

“Karna replied, ‘O Keshava! I will not do anything that causes displeasure to Dhritarashtra’s son. Know that I am engaged in Duryodhana’s welfare and have given up my life for him.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having heard these words, Krishna refrained. He then returned to the Pandavas, who had Yudhishtira in the forefront. In the midst of the soldiers, the eldest Pandava loudly said, ‘He who chooses us, will be regarded by us as an aide.’ Yuyutsu²⁶ glanced towards them and with a delighted mind, spoke to Dharmaraja Yudhishtira, Kunti’s son. ‘O great king! O unblemished one! If you accept me, in this battle, I will fight for your cause and against the sons of Dhritarashtra.’ Yudhishtira replied, ‘Come. All of us will fight with your ignorant brothers. O Yuyutsu! O mighty-armed one! Vasudeva and all of us accept that you will fight in our cause. O prince! O immensely radiant one! It seems that you will be the sole strand and the only one to offer funeral cakes²⁷ in Dhritarashtra’s lineage. Accept us. We accept you. Dhritarashtra’s evil-minded and intolerant son will cease to exist.’ Your son Yuyutsu then abandoned the Kouravyas. Accompanied by the sound of drums, he went to the army of the sons of Pandu. Together with his younger brothers, King Yudhishtira happily donned his armour

again, as resplendent as gold. All those bulls among men ascended their chariots. They arranged themselves in battle formations, as they had earlier. They instructed that hundreds of drums and smaller drums²⁸ be played. In different ways, those bulls among men roared like lions. On seeing the Pandavas, tigers among men, stationed on their chariots, all the kings, together with Dhrishtadyumna, were delighted and roared again. They had witnessed the magnanimity of the sons of Pandu, who honoured those who should be shown honour. All the lords of the earth applauded this. The kings spoke about the friendship, compassion and kindness those great-souled ones displayed towards their relatives, on the appropriate occasions. ‘Excellent’, ‘superb’—these words of praise were heard everywhere. There were auspicious chants about their deeds, attracting the mind and the heart.²⁹ All the mlecchas and aryaas who were there, and saw or heard about the conduct of the sons of Pandu, wept, their voices choking with tears. The spirited ones instructed hundreds of giant drums, pushkaras and conch shells, as white as milk, to be sounded.”

CHAPTER 902(42)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “My soldiers, and those of the others, were arranged in battle formations. Who was the first to strike, the Kurus or the Pandavas?”

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! Your son Duryodhana advanced with his brothers,³⁰ placing Bhishma at the forefront of the army. Delighted in their minds and wishing to fight with Bhishma, so did the Pandavas, with Bhimasena at the forefront. There were clamorous sounds in both the armies, with krakachas, trumpets made out of the horns of cows, drums, kettledrums, tambourines and the roars of horses and elephants. O king! With a tumultuous sound, they rushed at us and we at them. In that great encounter and confrontation, the giant armies of the Pandavas and the sons of Dhritarashtra trembled, like a forest stirred by the wind. The loud roar of those masses of kings, elephants, horses and chariots, dashing against each other at that inauspicious hour, was like that of the ocean agitated by a storm. When that tumultuous sound arose and made the body hair stand

up, the mighty-armed Bhimasena roared like a bull. Bhimasena's roars transcended the sounds of conch shells and drums, the trumpeting of elephants and the lion-like roars of the soldiers. Bhimasena's loud roar surpassed the neighing of thousands of horses in both the armies. On hearing the roar of that brave one, which was like the sound of the clouds or the sound of Shakra's thunder, your soldiers were frightened. All the animals excreted urine and dung, like animals do at the sound of a lion. He showed himself in a terrible form and roared like a giant cloud. He terrified the soldiers of your sons and attacked them. O king! When that mighty archer attacked them, he was surrounded by all the brothers who are your sons—Duryodhana, Durmukha, Duhsaha, Shala, atiratha Duhshasana, Durmarshana, Vivimshati, Chitrasena, maharatha Vikarna, Purumitra, Jaya, Bhoja and Somadatta's valorous son.³¹ They showered him with arrows, like clouds enveloping the sun. They brandished their giant bows, which were like clouds tinged with lightning. They unleashed sharp arrows that were like virulent serpents.

“At that, Droupadi's sons, Subhadra's maharatha son,³² Nakula, Sahadeva and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna repulsed the sons of Dhritarashtra and pierced them with sharp arrows. They shattered them, like summits with the great force of thunder. In that first encounter, with the terrible sound of bows twanging against arm-guards, neither your side, nor that of the other, retreated. O bull among the Bharata lineage! I witnessed the dexterity of Drona's disciples. O king! They shot many arrows, which always found their mark. The roar of the bows did not cease, even for an instant. The flaming arrows were like stars in the sky. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the other kings were spectators, witnessing the spectacular encounter between relatives. O king! Remembering the injuries they had suffered from each other, the maharathas were enraged and challenged and strove. With elephants, horses and chariots, the armies of the Kurus and the Pandavas were extremely beautiful on the field of battle, like figures on a painting. Then all the kings grasped their bows. Instructed by your son, they advanced with their armies. Thousands of

kings were instructed by Yudhishtira. They roared and attacked your son's army. The encounter between the soldiers of both the armies was terrible. Because of the dust raised by the soldiers, the sun disappeared. They advanced. They retreated. They advanced again. One could not detect any difference between ours and those of the enemy. An extremely fearful and tumultuous battle raged. But your father³³ surpassed all the other soldiers.”

CHAPTER 903(43)

‘Sanjaya said, “O lord of the earth! In the forenoon, there was an extremely fearful and terrible battle that destroyed the bodies of kings. Desiring victory in that battle, the Kurus and the Pandavas roared like lions, resounding in the sky and earth. There was a roar, the slapping of palms and the sound of conch shells. The brave ones roared at each other, like lions. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The bows twanged against arm-guards. There were the footfalls of the infantry and the loud roars of horses. Staffs and goads³⁴ descended. Weapons resounded. As the elephants dashed towards each other, bells jingled. There was a tremendous roar that made the body hair stand up. There was the roar of chariots, like the sound of the clouds. Cruel in their intentions and prepared to give up their lives, all of them³⁵ raised their standards and advanced against the Pandavas.

“O king! Grasping a terrible bow, like the staff of death, Shantanu's son himself advanced against Dhananjaya. Arjuna grasped the bow Gandiva, famous in the world. In the forefront of that battle, the spirited one advanced against Ganga's son. Those two tigers of the Kuru lineage wished to kill each other. Ganga's son pierced Partha in that battle, but he did not waver. O king! Pandava did the same to Bhishma, but could not make him waver. The great archer Satyaki dashed against Kritavarma. There was a tumultuous encounter between the two and it made the body hair stand up. Roaring and using sharp arrows, Satyaki pierced Kritavarma and Kritavarma Satyaki. They oppressed each other. With arrows in their

bodies, those immensely strong ones were as resplendent as flowering kimshukas,³⁶ blossoming in the spring. The great archer Abhimanyu fought with Brihadbala.³⁷ O lord of the earth! In that battle, the king of Kosala sliced down the standard of Subhadra's son and brought down his charioteer. When his charioteer was brought down from the chariot, Subhadra's son was enraged. O great king! He pierced Brihadbala with nine arrows. With a sharp and yellow arrow, he sliced off his standard. With another he brought down his *parshni*.³⁸ With yet another, he brought down his charioteer. O king! They were angry and continued to weaken each other with sharp arrows. In that battle, Bhimasena fought with your proud maharatha son Duryodhana, who had been the cause of the enmity. Both of those tigers among men were immensely strong and were foremost among the Kurus. In that field of battle, they enveloped each other with showers of arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing the wonderful ways those great-souled and skilled ones fought, all the beings were astounded. Duhshasana advanced against maharatha Nakula and pierced his innermost organs with many sharp arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Smiling, Madri's son used sharp arrows to slice down his³⁹ standard, bow and arrows. He then pierced him with twenty-five small arrows. Your son is unassailable. In that great battle, he pierced and brought down Nakula's horses, arrows and standard. Durmukha attacked the immensely strong Sahadeva. He fought him in that great battle and pierced him with a shower of arrows. In that great battle, the brave Sahadeva used an extremely sharp arrow to bring down Durmukha's charioteer. Both of them were invincible in battle and attacked each other. Desiring to repulse each other, they used terrible arrows to create fright. King Yudhishtira himself advanced against the king of Madra. The king of Madra sliced the revered one's⁴⁰ bow into two. When his bow was sliced, Yudhishtira, Kunti's son, took up another bow that was stronger and more forceful. Angered, the king told the lord of Madra, 'Wait' and covered him with straight-tufted arrows.

“O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that battle, Dhrishtadyumna attacked Drona with a firm bow that was capable of destroying enemies. Thus angered, Drona sliced it into three and unleashed an extremely terrible arrow that was like the staff of death. Thus despatched in that battle, it penetrated his⁴¹ body. Taking up another bow and fourteen arrows, Drupada’s son pierced Drona in that encounter. O great king! In that battle, the violent Shankha⁴² attacked Somadatta’s son⁴³, who was also a violent warrior. Exclaiming ‘Wait’, ‘Wait’, the brave one pierced him⁴⁴ in the right arm in the battle. Somadatta’s son then pierced Shankha in the shoulder. O lord of the earth! The bout between those two proud ones was as terrible as that between Vritra and Vasava. O lord of the earth! Enraged in that battle, maharatha Dhrishtaketu,⁴⁵ immeasurable in his soul, attacked Bahlika, who was also the embodiment of anger. O king! In that battle, Bahlika roared like a lion and oppressed the intolerant Dhrishtaketu with many arrows. The king of Chedi was angered and in that encounter, swiftly pierced Bahlika with nine arrows. It was like one mad elephant against another. They angrily attacked each other in that encounter and roared repeatedly. They fought in great rage, like Angaraka and Budha.⁴⁶ The rakshasa Ghatotkacha was terrible in deeds. He attacked Alambusha, the performer of cruel deeds, like Shakra against Bala.⁴⁷ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Ghatotkacha wounded the enraged and extremely strong rakshasa with ninety sharp arrows. In that encounter, Alambusha pierced Bhimasena’s extremely strong son in many places with straight-tufted arrows. Wounded by arrows in that battle, they looked like the immensely strong Bala and Shakra in the battle between the gods and the asuras.

“O king! In that battle, the powerful Shikhandi attacked Drona’s son. Angered at this, Ashvatthama wounded Shikhandi with an extremely sharp iron arrow and made him tremble. O king! At this, Shikhandi struck Drona’s son with a well-crafted, extremely sharp and extremely pointed arrow. In that bout, they struck each other with many other kinds of

arrows. O king! Virata was the general of an army and in that battle, he quickly and impetuously attacked the brave Bhagadatta. Virata was extremely angry. He showered arrows on Bhagadatta, like clouds showering on a mountain. But in that encounter, Bhagadatta, lord of the earth, quickly enveloped Virata, like clouds around the rising sun. Sharadvat's son, Kripa, attacked Brihadkshatra from Kekaya. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Kripa shrouded him with a shower of arrows. The angry Kekaya also showered arrows on Goutama. Having killed each other's horses and having sliced down each other's bows, both of them were bereft of their chariots. They wrathfully advanced against each other, intending to fight with swords. The battle that they fought was terrible in form and extremely fearful. King Drupada, the scorcher of enemies, intolerantly advanced against Jayadratha from Sindhu, who was cheerfully waiting. The king of Sindhu pierced Drupada with three tufted arrows and in that battle, was wounded in return. They fought a bout that was terrible in form and extremely fearful. It delighted the hearts of spectators and was like that between Angaraka and Shukra.⁴⁸

“Your son Vikarna possessed swift horses. He advanced against the immensely strong Sutasoma⁴⁹ and a battle started. Though Vikarna pierced Sutasoma, he could not make him waver. Nor could Sutasoma make Vikarna waver and it was wonderful. In the cause of the Pandavas, maharatha Chekitana, tiger among men, angrily advanced against the valorous Susharma.⁵⁰ O great king! In that battle, Susharma repulsed maharatha Chekitana with a great shower of arrows. Chekitana was enraged in that great encounter and enveloped Susharma with arrows, like a great cloud on a mountain. O Indra among kings! The powerful Shakuni attacked the powerful Prativindhya, like a crazy elephant against another crazy one. Enraged, Yudhishtira's son pierced Soubala with sharp arrows in that battle, like Maghavan against a danava. In that battle, Shakuni also wounded the immensely wise Prativindhya with straight-tufted arrows. O Indra among kings! In that battle, Shrutakarma⁵¹ attacked the valiant maharatha, Sudakshina from Kamboja. In that battle, Sudakshina pierced

Sahadeva's maharatha son, but could not make him waver, like Mount Mainaka. At that, Shrutakarma was enraged and oppressed the maharatha from Kamboja with many arrows, wounding him all over his body. In that battle, the angry Iravan took great care and attacked the intolerant Shrutayusha.⁵² In the encounter, Arjuna's maharatha son killed the horses of his opponent and roared loudly, being honoured by the soldiers. In that battle, the wrathful Shrutayusha used a supreme club to kill the horses of Phalguna's son and they continued to fight. In the battle, Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti advanced against the valiant maharatha, Kuntibhoja, who was at the head of his army, together with his son. We witnessed the extraordinary valour of those from Avanti there. They stationed themselves calmly, though they faced a large army. Anuvinda hurled a club at Kuntibhoja. But Kuntibhoja swiftly repulsed him with a torrent of arrows. Kuntibhoja's son pierced Vinda with an arrow. But he also pierced him in return and it was wonderful. O revered one! In that battle, together with their soldiers, the five brothers from Kekaya fought with the five from Gandhara, together with their soldiers. Your son Virabahu fought with Virata's son, Uttara, supreme among charioteers, and pierced him with sharp arrows. Uttara also pierced the steadfast one with sharp arrows. O king! In that battle, the king of Chedi attacked Uluka.⁵³ Uluka pierced him with sharp and feathered arrows. O lord of the earth! The battle that they fought was terrible in form. Unable to vanquish each other, they angrily wounded each other.

“Thus, in that battle, there were thousands of duels between chariots, elephants, horses and infantry, on their side and on ours. For a short instant, the field of battle looked beautiful. O king! But it soon became maddening and nothing could be seen. In that battle, elephants were against elephants and chariots against chariots. Horses were against horses and infantry against infantry. The battle became extremely difficult and confusing. In that battle, large numbers of warriors attacked each other. The assembled devarshis, siddhas and charanas witnessed that terrible battle, equal to that between the gods and the asuras. O revered one!

Thousands of elephants and chariots and masses of horses and foot soldiers behaved in a contrary way.⁵⁴ O tiger among men! It was repeatedly seen that chariots, elephants, cavalry and infantry fought with each other.”

CHAPTER 904(44)

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I will now tell you about the hundreds and thousands of bouts that took place there, without showing any considerations of respect. The son did not recognize the father, or the father the son born from his own loins. A brother did not recognize a brother there, nor a sister’s son his maternal uncle. The maternal uncle did not recognize his sister’s son, nor did a friend recognize his friend there. The Pandavas and the Kurus fought as if they were possessed. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Some tigers among men used chariots to bring down and shatter chariots, destroying their yokes. Axles of chariots clashed against axles of chariots. Seats clashed against seats of chariots. Some united against others who were united. They all wished to rob each other of their lives. Some chariots could not move, because they were obstructed by other chariots. Gigantic elephants had their temples shattered and fell down on other elephants. They were angry and used their tusks to attack each other in many places. Elephants adorned with decorations⁵⁵ and standards attacked the elephants of the enemy. O great king! These were giant elephants that encountered other powerful ones. Injured by the tusks, they were greatly distressed and roared. But these were disciplined because of their training. Urged by pikes and goads, elephants that were in musth attacked others that were in musth. Attacked by those that were in musth, giant elephants ran away everywhere, shrieking like cranes. There were trained elephants, with shattered temples and mouths. These supreme elephants were wounded by swords, lances and iron arrows. Pierced in their innards, they fell down and lost their lives. Others uttered terrible roars and ran away in different directions. The foot soldiers who guarded the elephants were armed and

possessed broad chests. They had swords, bows, unblemished battleaxes, clubs, maces, catapults,⁵⁶ lances, iron bludgeons and sharp and polished cutlasses.⁵⁷ O great king! Grasping these, they could be seen to run in every direction, desirous of taking each other's lives. The resplendent cutlasses were steeped in the blood of brave men and seemed to shine brilliantly. The swords were whirled by the arms of brave ones and made a whizzing sound. As they descended on the inner organs of enemies, they generated a tremendous sound. They were shattered by clubs and maces and by supreme swords. They were gored by the tusks of the tusked ones and wounded by the tusks. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In every place, large numbers of men were oppressed and let out sounds of lamentation, like those of men who are about to die.

“Those who were on extremely swift horses, with tails like those of swans, attacked others on horses. They hurled giant spears that were decorated with gold and were swift, sharp and polished. They descended like snakes. There were some great rathas on swift horses. They sliced off the heads of other brave rathas who were on horses. A ratha on a horse approached many who were within the shooting distance of an arrow and used straight-tufted iron arrows to kill them. There were crazy elephants that were like mountains or clouds and were adorned with gold. They brought down horses and crushed them with their feet. The elephants were struck on their humps and their flanks. They were pierced by spikes and some of them roared in agony. There was terrible confusion there. Many supreme elephants suddenly threw down horses and their riders and crushed them. Using the tips of their tusks, elephants flung down horses and their riders. They crushed chariots and their standards and roamed around. There were some giant male elephants, extremely energetic because of the musth strewing down their temples. They slew horses and riders with their trunks and their feet. Some horses and chariots were flung away by the elephants. All of them were thrown away in all the directions, with a loud noise. Swift, polished and sharp arrows were like serpents. They descended on the bodies of men and riders and pierced their iron

armour. Polished javelins were hurled by the arms of brave ones. O lord of the earth! They were terrible, like giant meteors, and descended. Blazing swords were taken out from sheaths made out of the skins of tigers and leopards. Once unsheathed, these polished swords were used to kill the enemies in battle. There were soldiers who had their sides sliced open. Despite this, they angrily attacked with swords, shields and battleaxes. Some were pierced by javelins. Others were cut down by battleaxes. Some were destroyed by elephants. Others were oppressed by horses. Some were crushed by the wheels of chariots. Others were brought down by sharp arrows. O king! Thus oppressed, the men loudly called for their relatives, their sons, fathers, brothers and kin, their maternal uncles and nephews. In that field of battle, some others called for others.⁵⁸ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! A large number of combatants lost their weapons. Their thighs were broken and their hands and arms torn apart. Their sides were shattered. Some were still alive and could be seen to be screaming from thirst. O lord of the earth! They had only a little bit of strength left and were overcome by thirst. They had fallen down on the ground in that battle and asked for water. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Others were weak and were covered in blood. Assembled there, they censured themselves and your son.

“O venerable one! But there were other brave kshatriyas. Having acted in enmity towards each other, they did not cast away their weapons. Nor did they lament. They roared in delight towards each other. Lying there, they could be seen to bite their teeth with their own lips. Their bows were contracted and they glanced towards each other. There were others who suffered from wounds and had been oppressed by arrows. But even then, those extremely strong ones bore the pain silently and were firm in their hearts. There were other brave charioteers who had lost their chariots in battle. They had been thrown down and wounded by the supreme elephants. Having been brought down, they asked for the chariots of others. O great king! They were as beautiful as blossoming kimshuka trees. Many terrible cries were heard in every division of the armies. It was an extremely terrible encounter that destroyed heroes. In that battle,

the father killed the son and the son killed the father. The sister's son killed the maternal uncle and the maternal uncle killed the sister's son. O king! A friend killed a friend and a relative killed a relative. Thus was the battle between the Kurus and the Pandavas. No mercy was shown in that fearful and terrible encounter. On encountering Bhishma, the army of the Parthas trembled. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The mighty-armed one's standard was adorned with five stars and a palm tree. It was made out of silver. O king! When ascended on his great chariot, Bhishma looked like the moon on Meru.”

CHAPTER 905(45)

‘Sanjaya said, “O bull among the Bharata lineage! Most of that terrible forenoon passed, an extremely terrible time that was destructive of great warriors. Then, urged by your son, Durmukha, Kritavarma, Kripa, Shalya and Vivimshati went to Bhishma and began to protect him. Protected by those five atirathas, the maharatha⁵⁹ penetrated the Pandava army. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bhishma's palm standard was seen to slice through the Chedis, the Kashis, the Karushas and the Panchalas in diverse ways. Bhishma's bow and weapons then sliced off the heads⁶⁰ with extremely forceful, straight-tufted and broad-headed arrows. O bull among the Bharata lineage! As the chariot travelled along its path, Bhishma seemed to be dancing. Some elephants were pierced by him in their vital parts and screamed piteously.

“Abhimanyu was extremely enraged and rushed towards Bhishma's chariot, stationed on his own chariot, which was yoked to supreme and tawny horses. His standard was embellished with pure gold and looked like a karnikara.⁶¹ He attacked Bhishma and those supreme charioteers.⁶² Striking the palm standard with sharp arrows, the brave one fought with Bhishma and his followers. He pierced Kritavarma with one and Shalya with five arrows and weakened his great-grandfather with nine sharp arrows. He drew his bow back fully and released an arrow that sliced down the standard embellished with gold.⁶³ With a broad-headed and straight-

tufted arrow that was capable of penetrating every kind of armour, he severed the head from the body of Durmukha's charioteer. With another broad-headed arrow, he sliced down Kripa's bow, decorated with gold. With many sharp and pointed arrows, he wounded all of them. The extremely angry maharatha seemed to be dancing around. On witnessing his dexterity, even the gods were satisfied. On seeing the success with which Krishna's son⁶⁴ hit the targets, all the charioteers, with Bhishma at the forefront, thought that he possessed the spirit of Dhananjaya himself. His bow twanged like Gandiva and when it was stretched and stretched again in every direction, it seemed to whirl like a circle of fire. Bhishma, the destroyer of enemy heroes, advanced towards him with great speed and in that battle, pierced Arjuna's son with nine arrows. He used three broad-headed arrows to slice down the standard of the immensely energetic one. Bhishma, rigid in his bows, used three broad-headed arrows to strike his charioteer. O venerable one! Kritavarma, Kripa and Shalya also pierced Krishna's son. But they could not make him tremble and he was as firm as Mount Mainaka. The brave one was surrounded by maharathas who were on the side of Dhritarashtra's son. Nevertheless, Krishna's son showered down arrows on those five charioteers. He repulsed their great weapons with showers of arrows. Releasing arrows towards Bhishma, Krishna's son roared loudly. O king! When he endeavoured thus in battle and released arrows towards Bhishma, his strength of arms was seen to be extremely great. Though he was valorous, Bhishma showered arrows at him. But in that battle, he sliced down all the arrows released from Bhishma's bow. In that encounter, the brave one used nine invincible arrows to slice down Bhishma's standard. At this, the people let out a loud shout. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! It⁶⁵ was made out of silver and was decorated with gold. It was extremely large and bore the mark of a palm. Sliced down by the arrows of Subhadra's son, it fell down on the ground. O bull among the Bharata lineage! On seeing that the standard had been brought down by the arrows of Subhadra's son, Bhima roared loudly, so that Subhadra's son might be encouraged. Then, in that extremely terrible moment, the

extremely strong Bhishma made many great and celestial weapons manifest themselves. The great-grandfather, immeasurable in his soul, enveloped Subhadra's son with hundreds and thousands of arrows with drooping tufts.

“At this, ten great maharatha archers from the Pandava side swiftly advanced on their chariots, so as to protect Subhadra's son. O lord of the earth! They were Virata and his son, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, Bhima, the five from Kekaya and Satyaki. When they advanced towards him in battle, Bhishma, Shantanu's son, pierced Panchala⁶⁶ with three and Satyaki with sharp arrows. He drew his bow completely back and used a sharp and tufted arrow, like a razor at the tip, to slice down Bhimasena's standard. O supreme among men! Bhima's standard was decorated with gold and bore the mark of a lion. Brought down by Bhishma, it fell down from the chariot. At this, in that battle, Bhima pierced Bhishma, Shantanu's son, with three arrows, Kripa with one and Kritavarma with eight. Riding on an elephant, Virata's son, Uttara, attacked the king who was the lord of Madra.⁶⁷ As that king of elephants advanced towards his chariot in that battle, irresistible in force, Shalya countered it. However, that king of elephants was enraged. It placed its leg on the yoke of the chariot and killed the four large and well-trained horses. Though the horses were killed, the lord of Madra remained on his chariot. So as to kill Uttara, he hurled a lance that was like a serpent. His⁶⁸ body and armour were pierced and he was submerged in great darkness.⁶⁹ With the grip on goad and lance loosened, he fell down from the shoulder of the elephant. Shalya grasped a sword and descended from his supreme chariot. With great valour, he sliced off the great trunk of that king among elephants. With its inner parts pierced by showers of arrows and with its trunk severed, the elephant let out a terrible roar. It fell down on the ground and died. Having performed this extraordinary deed, the maharatha lord of Madra swiftly ascended Kritavarma's radiant chariot.

“On seeing that his brother Uttara had been slain and seeing that Shalya was stationed resplendently with Kritavarma, Shankha, Virata's son,

blazed in anger, like a fire into which oblations have been poured. Wishing to kill Shalya, the lord of Madra, the powerful one extended his great bow, decorated with gold and bearing the mark of the sun, and attacked him. Surrounded on all sides by a large number of chariots, he advanced towards Shalya's chariot and enveloped him with a shower of arrows. On seeing him advance, with the valour of a crazy elephant, seven of your charioteers surrounded him from every direction,⁷⁰ wishing to protect the lord of Madra, who seemed to be advancing into the jaws of death. Roaring like thunder, the mighty-armed Bhishma grasped a bow that was as long as a palm tree and attacked Shankha in that battle. When they saw the immensely strong and great archer, the army of the Pandavas trembled, like a boat that is tossed around in a storm. Then Arjuna swiftly advanced and placed himself in front of Shankha, so as to protect him from Bhishma and a battle raged between the two. There were great cries and exclamations as the two warriors fought each other in that encounter. The energy of one seemed to merge into the energy of the other⁷¹ and everyone was astounded. Then Shalya grasped a club in his hand and descended from his great chariot. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He killed Shankha's four horses. When his horses were slain, Shankha alighted from his chariot and grasping a sword, ran towards Bibhatsu's⁷² chariot. Climbing onto it, he found peace again. Many shafted arrows were released from Bhishma's chariot and they covered everything on earth and in the sky. Bhishma, foremost among the wielders of weapons, used his arrows to kill large numbers of Panchalas, Matsyas, Kekayas and Prabhadrakas. Abandoning the battle with Pandava Savyasachi, he⁷³ rushed towards Panchala Drupada, surrounded by his soldiers. O king! He enveloped his beloved relative with many arrows. Like a forest consumed by a fire at the end of winter, Drupada's soldiers were seen to be consumed by those arrows. Bhishma was stationed in that battle, like a fire without smoke. He was like the sun at midday, scorching with his energy. The Pandava warriors were incapable of glancing at Bhishma. Oppressed by fear, the Pandavas looked in every direction. But without seeing a

protector, they were like cattle afflicted by the cold. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The soldiers were slaughtered in large numbers and retreated in despondence. The Pandava troops uttered great sounds of lamentation. Shantanu's son, Bhishma, held a bow that was always drawn in the form of a circle. He released flaming arrows that were like poisonous snakes. Rigid in his vows, he created a continuous stream of arrows in every direction. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! After indicating which one he would target, he killed many Pandava rathas. When the soldiers were crushed and shattered in every way, the sun set and nothing could be seen. O bull among the Bharata lineage! On seeing Bhishma stationed in that great battle, the Parthas withdrew their soldiers.'"

CHAPTER 906(46)

'Sanjaya said, "O bull among the Bharata lineage! When the troops were withdrawn on the first day, Duryodhana was delighted at having seen the enraged Bhishma in battle. With all his brothers and all the lords of the earth who were on his side, Dharmaraja swiftly went to Janardana. O king! Having witnessed Bhishma's valour and overcome with great sorrow as he reflected on his defeat, he spoke to Varshneya. 'O Krishna! Behold the great archer Bhishma, whose valour is terrible. He consumes my soldiers with his arrows, like a fire consumes dry grass. How can we possibly glance at that great-souled one? He is licking up my soldiers, like a fire fed with oblations. On seeing that immensely strong tiger among men, armed with a bow, my soldiers are afflicted with arrows and flee. The angry Yama, the wielder of the vajra, Varuna with the noose and Kubera with the club can be vanquished in battle. But the immensely energetic and greatly strong Bhishma is incapable of being conquered. Without a boat, I am immersed in the fathomless waters of Bhishma. O Keshava! Because of the weakness of my own intelligence, I have encountered Bhishma. O Govinda! It is better for me to retire to the forest and dwell there. I should not offer all these lords of the earth to death, in Bhishma's form. O Krishna! Bhishma is knowledgeable about great weapons and he will

destroy my soldiers. Like insects dash into a blazing fire and are destroyed, my soldiers will advance towards their destruction. O Varshneya! I have resorted to valour for the sake of a kingdom and am heading towards destruction. My brave brothers are afflicted, oppressed by arrows. Because of me and because of affection towards their brother, they have been dislodged from their kingdom and from happiness. We place a great value on life and now, life seems to be extremely difficult to attain. For the remaining part of my life, I will perform severe austerities. O Keshava! I will not bring about the destruction of my friends in battle. With his divine weapons, the immensely strong Bhishma incessantly kills many of my armed rathas, who are themselves foremost among the wielders of arms. O Madhava! Swiftly tell me what should be done for my own welfare. I see Savyasachi stationed in battle, as if he was a neutral spectator. Bhima alone remembers the dharma of kshatriyas. Using the valour of his arms, the mighty-armed one fights to the best of his capability. To the best of his capacity, this great-minded one kills warriors with his club. He performs difficult deeds on elephants, chariots, horses and infantry. O venerable one! But even if he were to fight for a hundred years, in a fair fight, this brave one is incapable of destroying the soldiers of the enemy. This friend of yours⁷⁴ is alone knowledgeable about all weapons. On seeing us consumed by Bhishma and the great-souled Drona, he looks on with indifference. Bhishma's divine weapons, and those of the great-souled Drona, are repeatedly consuming all the kshatriyas. O Krishna! Such is Bhishma's valour that, if he is enraged, together with all the kings on his side, he will certainly annihilate us. O lord of yoga! Look for a maharatha and great archer who can pacify Bhishma in battle, like clouds of rain against a conflagration. O Govinda! It is through your favours that the Pandavas will kill their enemies, regain their own kingdom and find delight with their relatives.' Having said this, the great-souled Partha remained silent for a long time, deep in reflection and with his senses robbed by misery.

“On learning that Pandava was oppressed by sorrow, with his senses robbed by unhappiness, Govinda spoke, delighting all the Pandavas. ‘O

foremost among the Bharata lineage! Do not sorrow. You should not sorrow when all your brothers are brave and archers who are famous in all the worlds. O king! I am engaged in ensuring your welfare and so are maharatha Satyaki, the aged Virata and Drupada and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna. O supreme among kings! So are all these kings and their soldiers. O lord of the earth! They are waiting for your favours and are devoted to you. The immensely strong Parshata Dhrishtadyumna has always been engaged in your welfare and doing that which pleases you. He has been appointed as overall commander. The mighty-armed Shikhandi is certain to bring about Bhishma's death.' Having heard this, the king spoke to maharatha Dhrishtadyumna, in that assembly and in Vasudeva's hearing. 'O Dhrishtadyumna! O venerable one! Listen to what I am telling you. You should not transgress the words that I will speak. With Vasudeva's approval, you are our supreme commander. O bull among men! You are the commander of the soldiers of Pandu, just as in earlier times, Kartikeya always was that of the gods. O tiger among men! Display your valour and kill the Kouravas. O venerable one! O bull among men! I will follow you, Bhima and Krishna, together with the sons of Madri and the armoured sons of Droupadi, and the foremost among all the other lords of the earth.' Delighting everyone, Dhrishtadyumna replied, 'O Partha! In earlier times, I have been ordained by Shambhu as the one who will kill Drona. O lord of the earth! I will now fight in battle with Bhishma, Drona, Shalya, Jayadratha and all the others intoxicated at the prospect of battle.' When that great archer, the Parshata who was unassailable in battle, the destroyer of brave ones and an Indra among kings, spoke in this way, everyone loudly applauded.

“Partha told Parshata, the commander of the army, ‘The vyuha⁷⁵ known by the name of Krouncharuna is the destroyer of all enemies.⁷⁶ When the gods and the asuras fought in earlier times, Brihaspati told this to Indra. Therefore, deploy this battle formation, which is destructive of enemy soldiers. This has not been seen before. Let the kings, together with the Kurus, now see it.’ Having been thus addressed by that god among

men, like Vishnu speaking to the wielder of the vajra, when it was morning, he placed Dhananjaya in the forefront of the entire army. His⁷⁷ standard had been constructed by Vishvakarma on Indra's⁷⁸ instruction and it was extremely beautiful as it fluttered in the path of the sun. It was decorated with flags and possessed the complexion of Indra's weapon.⁷⁹ It coursed through the sky like a traveller of the skies and was like a city of the gandharvas. O venerable one! It seemed to be dancing along, along the path that the chariot took. Partha, the wielder of Gandiva, was adorned with this jewel. He was adorned with it, like the self-creating one⁸⁰ is with the sun. King Drupada was at the head, surrounded by a large army. O lord of men! Kuntibhoja and Chedi were the two eyes.⁸¹ O bull among the Bharata lineage! Dasharnas, Prayagas, together with masses of Dasherakas, Anupakas and Kiratas were the neck. O king! Together with Patachcharas, Hundas, Pouravakas and Nishadas, Yudhishtira was the back. Bhimasena, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, Droupadi's sons, Abhimanyu and maharatha Satyaki were the wings. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were Pishachas, Daradas, Pundras, together with Kundivishas, Madakas, Ladakas, Tanganas, the further Tanganas, Bahlikas, Tittiras, Cholas and Pandyas. O king! These countries formed the right wing. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Agniveshyas, Jagatundas, Paladashas, Shabaras, Tumbupas, Vatsas, together with the Nakulas,⁸² Nakula and Sahadeva resorted to the left wing. There were ten thousand chariots on the joints of the wings, a hundred thousand on the head, a hundred million and twenty thousand on the back and one hundred and seventy thousand on the neck. O king! There were many elephants, like mobile mountains, on the joints of the wings, the wings and the tips of the wings. The rear was protected by Virata, together with Kekaya, the king of Kashi and Shaibya⁸³ and thirty thousand chariots. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus did the Pandavas constitute a great vyuha and having clad themselves in armour and stationed themselves in battle, waited for the sun to rise. Their white umbrellas were radiant and had the

hue of the sun. They were giant and unblemished and adorned their elephants and chariots.””

CHAPTER 907(47)

‘Sanjaya said, “O venerable one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The infinitely energetic Partha created that extremely terrible battle formation. On seeing that impenetrable and great Krouncha vyuha, your son went to the preceptor, Kripa, Shalya, Somadatta’s son, Vikarna and Ashvatthama, together with Duhshasana and all his brothers and the many brave warriors who were assembled there for the battle. At that time, he spoke these words, delighting all of them. ‘All of you are armed with many weapons and are learned in the sacred texts and in arms. You are maharathas. Alone, each one of you is capable of slaying the sons of Pandu and their soldiers in battle, and you are united. Our forces are protected by Bhishma and are unlimited. O supreme among kings! Their forces are limited. Let the Samsthanas, Shurasenas, Venikas, Kukkuras, Arevakas, Trigartas and Yavanas remain with Shatrunjaya,⁸⁴ Duhshasana, the brave Vikarna, Nanda, Upanandaka⁸⁵ and Chitrasena,⁸⁶ together with the Panibhadrakas and with their respective troops at the forefront, protect Bhishma.’ O venerable one! Then Drona, Bhishma and your sons created a giant vyuha to counter that of the Pandus. Like the lord of the gods, Bhishma advanced, leading a large army and surrounded by a large number of soldiers. O lord of the earth! The powerful and great archer, Bharadvaja’s son,⁸⁷ followed him, with the Kuntalas, Dasharnas, Magadhas, Vidarbhas, Mekalas, Karnas⁸⁸ and Pravaranas. With all these soldiers, Bhishma was resplendent. The Gandharas, Sindhus, Souviras, Shibis and Vasatis and Shakuni and his own soldiers, protected Bharadvaja’s son. With the Ashvatakas, Vikarnas,⁸⁹ Sharmilas, Kosalas, Daradas, Chuchupas, Kshudrakas and Malavas, Soubala and his soldiers and with all his brothers, King Duryodhana cheerfully advanced. O venerable one! Bhurishrava, Shala, Shalya, Bhagadatta and Vinda and Anuvinda from

Avanti guarded the left flank. Somadatta's son, Susharma, Sudakshina from Kamboja, Shatayu and Shrutayu guarded the right flank.

Ashvatthama, Kripa and Satvata Kritavarma guarded the rear, with a large number of soldiers. Their rear was protected by kings from many countries and Ketuman, Vasumana and the powerful son of the king of Kashi.

“O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All of your soldiers were delighted at the prospect of battle. They cheerfully blew on their conch shells and roared like lions. On hearing these sounds, the aged grandfather of the Kurus was delighted. The powerful one roared like a lion and blew on his conch shell. At this, conch shells, kettledrums, many different kinds of drums and battle-drums began to sound and there was a tumultuous uproar.⁹⁰ Hrishikesha and Dhananjaya were stationed on a giant chariot drawn by white horses and respectively blew on the excellent conch shells Panchajanya and Devadatta, decorated with gold and jewels. Vrikodara, terrible in deeds, blew on the giant conch shell Poundra. Kunti's son, King Yudhishtira, blew on Anantavijaya. Nakula blew on Sughosa and Sahadeva on Manipushpaka. The king of Kashi, Shaibya, maharatha Shikhandi, Dhrishtadyumna, Virata, maharatha Satyaki, the great archer from Panchala⁹¹ and Droupadi's five sons—all of them blew on giant conch shells and roared like lions. The extremely loud and tumultuous roar created by those warriors echoed on earth and in the sky. O great king! Thus did the cheerful Kurus and Pandavas assemble again for battle, with a desire to torment each other in the encounter.”

CHAPTER 908(48)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “Having assembled in battle formation in this way, what did mine and those of the others do? How did those supreme among wielders of weapons strike?”

‘Sanjaya replied, “All the troops were arranged in battle formation. The warriors were armoured and waited. The standards were raised up. On seeing his army, which was like the limitless ocean, your son, King Duryodhana, stationed himself in its midst and spoke to all the warriors on

your side. ‘You are armoured. Now fight.’ Their minds were full of cruelty and they had given up the desire to live. With their standards raised, all of them rushed against the Pandavas. A terrible battle started and it made the body hair stand up. Your chariots and elephants were mixed up with that of the enemy. Charioteers released sharp arrows that were full of energy and shafted with gold. These descended on elephants and horses. When the battle commenced, the mighty-armed and armoured Bhishma, terrible in his valour, grasped a bow. The aged grandfather of the Kurus advanced and showered arrows on those brave men—Subhadra’s son,⁹² Bhimasena, Shini’s maharatha son,⁹³ Kekaya, Virata, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna and the lords of Chedi and Matsya. At the encounter with that brave one, the great vyuha⁹⁴ wavered. The battle that was fought by all the soldiers was extremely great. Many horse-riders, charioteers and the foremost among elephants were slain. Masses of chariots on the Pandava side began to flee.

“Arjuna, tiger among men, saw maharatha Bhishma. He angrily told Varshneya, ‘Go where the grandfather is. O Varshneya! It is evident that when he is extremely enraged, engaged in Duryodhana’s welfare, this Bhishma will destroy my army. O Janardana! Protected by the one who wields a firm bow, Drona, Kripa, Shalya, Vikarna and the sons of Dhritarashtra, with Duryodhana at the forefront, will slaughter the Panchalas. O Janardana! For the sake of our soldiers, I will go where Bhishma is.’ Vasudeva replied, ‘O Dhananjaya! O brave one! Be careful. I will take you towards the grandfather’s chariot.’ O lord of men! Having said this, Shouri⁹⁵ took the chariot, famous in the worlds, towards Bhishma’s chariot. The horses had the complexion of cranes.⁹⁶ As it advanced, many flags fluttered. The standard was raised and the extremely terrible ape roared on it. The chariot was as radiant as the sun and it roared like a giant cloud. Pandava slaughtered the soldiers of the Kouravas and the Shurasenas and the one who dispelled the sorrow of his well-wishers swiftly advanced to the battle. He descended with the force of an intoxicated elephant, using his arrows to bring down warriors in that battle. Shantanu’s son, Bhishma, was protected by warriors who were led

by Saindhava⁹⁷ and those from the east, Souvira and Kekaya and encountered him with force. Who other than the grandfather of the Kurus and the two rathas Drona and Vaikartana⁹⁸ are capable of withstanding the wielder of the Gandiva in battle?

“O great king! Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kouravas, pierced Arjuna with seventy-seven iron arrows. O king! Drona pierced him with twenty-five arrows, Kripa with fifty, Duryodhana with sixty-four, Shalya with nine arrows and Vikarna pierced Pandava with ten broad-headed arrows. But though he was struck in every direction with sharp arrows, the mighty-armed and great archer did not suffer and was like a mountain that has been pierced. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Kiriti's⁹⁹ soul is beyond measure. In return, he struck Bhishma with twenty-five arrows, Kripa with nine, Drona, tiger among men, with sixty arrows, Vikarna with three, Artayani¹⁰⁰ with three and the king¹⁰¹ with five arrows. Satyaki, Virata, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, Droupadi's sons and Abhimanyu surrounded Dhananjaya. The great archer Drona was engaged in ensuring Gangeya's¹⁰² welfare. Panchala,¹⁰³ supported by the Somakas, advanced against him. Bhishma, best among charioteers, swiftly pierced Pandava with eighty sharp arrows. At this, your warriors were extremely delighted. The powerful Dhananjaya was a lion among charioteers. On hearing these roars of applause, he cheerfully penetrated their midst and having done that, sported with his bow and took aim at those maharathas. Dhananjaya reached the midst of those lions among charioteers. On seeing that his own soldiers were tormented by Partha in that battle, King Duryodhana, lord of men, spoke to Bhishma. ‘O father!¹⁰⁴ Pandu's powerful son is accompanied by Krishna. O Gangeya! He is destroying our soldiers and severing our roots, even though you and Drona, supreme among charioteers, are alive. It is because of you that maharatha Karna has discarded his weapons and does not fight in this battle with Partha, though he always has my welfare in mind. O Gangeya! Act so that Phalguna may be killed.’ O king! Having been thus addressed, your father, Devavrata,¹⁰⁵

exclaimed, ‘Shame on the dharma of kshatriyas,’ and advanced towards Partha’s chariot.

“O king! All the kings saw that these two, both drawn by white horses, were ready to do battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They roared like lions and blew on their conch shells. O venerable one! When Bhishma was stationed in battle, Drona’s son,¹⁰⁶ Duryodhana and your son Vikarna surrounded him. All the Pandavas surrounded Dhananjaya. When they were stationed in battle, a great duel commenced. In that battle, Gangeya pierced Partha with nine arrows and Arjuna pierced him back with ten arrows that penetrated the inner organs. O Kourava! Arjuna prided himself on his skills in battle. With a thousand well-directed arrows, Pandava enveloped Bhishma in every direction. But Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, repulsed Partha’s net of arrows with his own net of arrows. Both of them were extremely cheerful. Both of them found delight in the battle. They fought against each other, each desiring to counter the other. But neither was superior to the other. The net of arrows released from Bhishma’s bow were seen to be repulsed by Arjuna’s arrows. In that fashion, the nets of arrows released from Arjuna’s bow were all cut down by Gangeya’s arrows and fell down on the ground. Arjuna pierced Bhishma with twenty-five sharp arrows. And in that battle, Bhishma pierced Partha with thirty arrows. Those extremely strong ones wounded each other’s horses, pierced the standards and struck the chariots and wheels of the chariots. The destroyers of enemies seemed to be playing. O great king! Bhishma, supreme among the wielders of weapons, was enraged. With three arrows, he pierced Vasudeva between the breasts. O king! Pierced by Bhishma’s arrows, Achyuta Madhusudana was resplendent in that battle, like a blossoming kimshuka. On seeing Madhava thus pierced, Arjuna became extremely angry. In that encounter, he pierced Gangeya’s charioteer with three arrows. In that encounter, the brave ones took aim against each other and endeavoured to kill each other, but did not succeed. The chariots advanced and retreated, traversing wonderful circles. Both charioteers displayed their skill and dexterity in many ways. O king! In seeking their objective, the maharathas repeatedly changed their positions and adopted

different paths, so that they could strike each other. Both of them roared like lions and blew on their conch shells. Loud noises could be heard as the maharathas twanged their bows. There was the sound of conch shells and roars from the axles of the chariots. The earth began to tremble, as if there was an earthquake underneath. O bull among the Bharata lineage! No one could detect a weakness in either of them. Both of them were powerful and valiant in battle. Each was equal to the other. It was only through the signs that the Kouravas could approach Bhishma and also through the signs that the sons of Pandu could approach Partha.¹⁰⁷ O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On witnessing the valour displayed by these best of men in the battle, all the beings were struck with wonder. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that battle, no weakness was discernible in either of the two, like those established in dharma. Nor could any deceit be seen. In that battle, both became invisible because of the nets of arrows and suddenly became visible again.

““On witnessing the valour, the gods, together with the gandharvas, the charanas and the rishis, spoke to each other. ‘When they are enraged, neither of these maharathas is capable of being vanquished in battle, even by the gods, the asuras, the gandharvas and all the worlds. The worlds will regard this extremely marvellous battle as wonderful. Such a battle will never take place again. In the encounter, Bhishma is incapable of being vanquished by the intelligent Partha, even though he uses his bow, chariot, horses and arrows in the battle. In that fashion, in a battle, even the gods cannot conquer Pandava. Though he makes every endeavour, Bhishma cannot vanquish that archer in an encounter.’ O lord of the earth! We heard these words of praise spoken about both Gangeya and Arjuna in that battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! While they fought, your warriors and those of the Pandaveyas, killed each other in the battle. They valiantly used polished and sharp swords, polished battleaxes, many kinds of arrows and diverse types of weapons and other arms. As long as that extremely terrible battle continued, the brave ones on either side killed one another. O king! There was a great encounter between Drona and Panchala.¹⁰⁸”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! Tell me how the great archer Drona and Parshata Panchala fought and strove against each other in that battle. O Sanjaya! It is my view that destiny is superior to human endeavour, since Shantanu’s son, Bhishma, could not vanquish Pandava in battle. When Bhishma is enraged in battle, he can destroy all mobile and immobile objects in the worlds. O Sanjaya! With his energy, why could he not escape from Pandava in that encounter?”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O king! Be patient and hear about that extremely terrible battle. Pandava is incapable of being vanquished by the gods, together with Vasava. With sharp arrows, Drona wounded Dhrishtadyumna and used a broad-headed arrow to bring down his charioteer from the safety of the chariot. O venerable one! Using the best of arrows, the wrathful one wounded Dhrishtadyumna’s four horses. The brave Dhrishtadyumna smiled, and asking Drona to wait, pierced him with nine sharp arrows. At this, Bharadvaja’s powerful son, immeasurable in his soul, enveloped the intolerant Dhrishtadyumna with arrows. With a desire to kill Parshata, he then grasped a terrible arrow. It was like Shakra’s vajra to the touch and resembled the staff of death. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing that Bharadvaja’s son was about to use it in battle, a great lamentation arose from all the soldiers. We then witnessed Dhrishtadyumna’s extraordinary manliness. Like an immobile mountain, the brave one remained stationed in battle. As the terrible and flaming arrow rushed towards him, like his own death, he sliced it down and unleashed a shower of arrows on Bharadvaja’s son. On witnessing that extremely difficult deed accomplished by Dhrishtadyumna, all the Panchalas, together with the Pandavas, were delighted and roared loudly. With a desire to kill Drona, the valiant one then hurled a lance, decorated with gold and lapis lazuli, with great force. On witnessing the gold-adorned lance suddenly descending in the battle, Bharadvaja’s son smiled and sliced it down into three parts. O lord of men! Having seen that his lance had been thus repulsed, the powerful Dhrishtadyumna unleashed a shower of arrows in Drona’s direction. But the greatly famous Drona

repulsed this shower of arrows and in the midst of this, sliced down the bow of Drupada's son. When his bow had been sliced down in that battle, the immensely famous and powerful one hurled a giant club towards Drona. It was as firm as a mountain. Having been thus forcefully hurled, the club headed towards Drona, for his destruction. We then witnessed the extraordinary valour of Bharadvaja's son. He countered the gold-adorned club with dexterity. Having repulsed the club, he despatched broad-headed arrows towards Parshata. They were extremely sharp and yellow. They were gold-tufted and had been sharpened on stone. In that battle, they penetrated his armour and drank his blood. Then the great-minded Dhrishtadyumna picked up another bow. In that encounter, he used his valour to pierce Drona with five arrows. Those two bulls among men were covered with blood. O king! They looked as beautiful as flowering kimshukas in the spring. O king! Intolerant with anger and displaying his valour at the head of his troops, Drona again sliced down the bow of Drupada's son. When the bow had been sliced down, the one with the immeasurable soul covered him with arrows with drooping tufts, like clouds raining on a mountain. He used a broad-headed arrow to bring down his charioteer from the safety of the chariot. With four sharp arrows, he brought down his four horses. He roared like a lion in that battle. With another broad-headed arrow, he sliced down the leather guard from his¹⁰⁹ hands. His bow was sliced down. He was without a chariot. His horses were killed. His charioteer was slain. Displaying great manliness, he tried to leap down, with a club in his hands. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But before he could descend from his chariot, he¹¹⁰ used his arrows to shatter the club into fragments and it was an extraordinary feat. The powerful one with the excellent arms¹¹¹ then grasped a large and divine sword and a huge and beautiful shield marked with the marks of one hundred moons. In a desire to kill Drona, he rushed towards him with force, like a lion looking for meat dashes towards a crazy elephant in the forest. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! We then witnessed the extraordinary manliness of Bharadvaja's son, his dexterity in the use of

weapons and the strength of his arms. He repulsed Parshata with a shower of arrows. Though he was strong, he could not advance any further in that battle. We saw maharatha Dhrishtadyumna stationed there, using the shield in his hands to ward off the shower of arrows.

“Then the mighty-armed and powerful Bhima suddenly arrived, wishing to aid the great-souled Parshata in that battle. O king! He pierced Drona with seven sharp arrows and swiftly took up Parshata on his own chariot. King Duryodhana despatched Kalinga to protect Bharadvaja’s son, with a large number of soldiers. O lord of men! On the instructions of your son, that large army of Kalingas rushed towards Bhima. Drona, supreme among charioteers, abandoned Panchala and encountered and fought with the aged Virata and Drupada. In that battle, Dhrishtadyumna went to help Dharmaraja. A tumultuous battle commenced and it made the body hair stand up. This was between the Kalingas and the great-souled Bhima. It was terrible in form and awful, and was destructive of the universe.”

CHAPTER 910(50)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “The immensely strong and brave Bhimasena roams around with a club, like death with a staff in his hands. He is the performer of extraordinary deeds. Kalinga, the general of an army, was instructed. But with his soldiers, how did he encounter him¹¹² in battle?”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O Indra among kings! Thus instructed by your son, the immensely strong one was protected by a large army and advanced towards Bhima’s chariot. That large army of the Kalingas was full of chariots, elephants and horses and was armed with many mighty weapons. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As the army of the Kalingas marched towards him, led by Ketuman and the son of Nishada, Bhimasena, accompanied by the Chedis, descended on it. Together with Ketuman, the angry Shrutayu¹¹³ arranged his troops in battle formation and advanced before Bhima and Chedi in that battle. The king of Kalinga possessed many thousands of chariots. Other than Ketuman, the Nishadas had ten thousand elephants. O king! In that battle, they surrounded Bhimasena

from all directions. With Bhimasena at the forefront, the Chedis, the Matsyas and the Karushas swiftly advanced against the Nishadas and the other kings. A fierce battle raged, terrible in form. In a desire to kill each other, the warriors on both sides dashed forward. The sudden battle that was fought between Bhima and his enemies was terrible. O great king! It was like that between Indra and the large army of the daityas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As the armies fought on that field of battle, a tumultuous noise arose, like the roar of the ocean. O lord of the earth! The warriors killed each other. The entire ground was like a cremation ground, strewn with flesh and blood. Driven by the desire to kill, the warriors could not distinguish between their own and those of the enemy. Those brave ones were invincible in battle and even killed those from their own side. There was an extremely fierce fight, between the few and the many.¹¹⁴ O lord of the earth! The Chedis fought with the Kalingas and the Nishadas. The extremely strong Chedis exhibited their manliness, to the best of their capacity, but then abandoned Bhimasena and retreated.

“When the Chedis retreated, Pandava did not retreat. Resorting to the strength of his own arms, he faced all the Kalingas. The immensely strong Bhimasena remained stationary on his chariot. He enveloped the Kalinga army with sharp arrows. The great archer who was the king of Kalinga and his maharatha son, famous by the name of Shakradeva, attacked Pandava with arrows. But the mighty-armed Bhima brandished his beautiful bow. Resorting to the strength of his arms, he fought with Kalinga. In that battle, Shakradeva shot many arrows. In that battle, he killed Bhimasena’s horses with those arrows and showered down clouds of arrows, like a downpour at the end of the summer. But the immensely strong Bhimasena remained stationed on his chariot, despite his horses having been slain, and hurled a club made completely of steel at Shakradeva.¹¹⁵ O king! The son of Kalinga was thus killed. With his standard and charioteer, he fell down from the chariot onto the ground. On seeing that his own son had been killed, the king of Kalinga surrounded Bhima from every direction with many thousands of chariots. At this, the mighty-armed Bhima

discarded that giant club. He grasped a sword, so as to accomplish a terrible deed. O bull among kings! That bull among men also took up an unparalleled shield. It was marked with stars and half-moons and was made out of gold. The enraged Kalinga touched the string of his bow. He grasped a terrible arrow that was like the venom of a serpent and despatched it at Bhimasena, desiring to kill that lord of men. Despatched with force, that sharp arrow descended. O king! However, Bhimasena sliced it into two with his huge sword. He then roared in delight, frightening the soldiers. In that encounter with Bhimasena, Kalinga became even angrier. He swiftly hurled fourteen lances that had been sharpened on stone. O king! But before they could reach him, the mighty-armed Pandava used his supreme sword to swiftly cut them down in the sky.

““The bull among men saw that Bhanuman¹¹⁶ was advancing towards him. Bhanuman enveloped Bhima with a shower of arrows and roared powerfully, making the sound echo in the sky. But Bhima was not prepared to tolerate that lion-like roar in that great battle. He possessed a giant roar himself and roared loudly. At this shout, the Kalinga soldiers were frightened. O bull among the Bharata lineage! In that battle, they no longer regarded Bhima as human. O great king! Bhima let out a loud roar. O venerable one! With the sword in his hand, he used the supreme elephant’s tusks¹¹⁷ to climb onto the back of that king of elephants. With that large sword, he sliced Bhanuman down the middle. The scorcher of enemies killed the duelling prince in this way. His sword was capable of bearing a great load and he then made it descend on the neck of the elephant. With its neck severed, that leader of elephants screamed and fell down, like the summit of a mountain shattered by the battering of the sea. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! That descendant of the Bharata lineage then descended from the elephant that was falling down.

““Armoured, he stood on the ground, indomitable in soul and with a sword in his hand. He roamed around along many paths, bringing down frightened elephants. Everywhere, he looked like a whirling circle of fire.

The lord slaughtered masses of horses, elephants, masses of chariots and large numbers of infantry, covering them with blood. Intoxicated with his valour, Bhima was seen in that battle, roaming around like a hawk amidst the enemy. With great force, he sliced off their bodies and their heads and also those who fought on elephants, using his sharp sword in that battle. He fought wrathfully on foot, increasing the terror of his enemies. He was like Yama at the time of destruction and confounded them. Only the foolish ones roared and advanced towards him, as he forcefully roamed around on that great field of battle, with his sword unsheathed. That powerful destroyer of enemies cut down chariots, the yokes of chariots and killed the horses yoked to chariots. Bhimasena was seen to display many different kinds of motions. He whirled around and leapt up. Pandava was seen to strike towards the sides and advance in front. The great-souled Pandava sliced down some with his supreme sword. Some shrieked as they were pierced in their inner organs and fell down, bereft of their lives. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Many elephants had their tusks and trunks severed. Others had their temples shattered. Without any riders, they killed their own soldiers as they screamed and fell down. O king! Broken lances, the heads of the drivers of elephants, colourful seats on the elephants, the sides blazing in gold, spikes that adorned the collars,¹¹⁸ standards, weapons, quivers and other machines, colourful bows, beautiful pots with fire in them, goads, different kinds of bells and hilts that were embellished with gold—all these were seen by us, already fallen, or falling down, together with the riders. The elephants were slain, with the front and rear of their bodies, and their trunks, shattered. That arena seemed to be strewn with mountains that had fallen down. Having killed many giant elephants, that bull among men began to destroy the horses. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He brought down the foremost of horse-riders. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The battle between him and them was extremely terrible. In the great battle, we saw the hilts of swords, thongs, reins resplendent in gold, cushions, spikes, extremely expensive swords, armour, shields and colourful carpets strewn over the ground. There were also sparkling weapons with colourful inlays. He made the earth look as if

it was strewn with lilies. The immensely strong Pandava leapt up and brought some charioteers down. He cut them and their standards down with his sword. The renowned one repeatedly dashed in all the directions. He astounded the people by traversing diverse paths. He killed some with his legs. He brought down others and pressed them down. He beheaded some with his sword and frightened others with his roars. The force of his thighs brought others down on the ground. Others fled on seeing him, dying out of terror.

“Then the swift and large army of the Kalingas, which had surrounded Bhishma¹¹⁹ in battle, attacked Bhimasena. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Shrutayu was at the head of the Kalinga army and on seeing him, Bhimasena attacked him. On seeing him advance, Kalinga, whose soul was immeasurable, pierced Bhimasena between the breasts with nine arrows. Struck by Kalinga’s arrows, Bhimasena was like an elephant goaded with a hook and blazed in anger, like a fire into which kindling had been offered. Ashoka then brought a chariot decorated with gold and Bhimasena ascended this chariot with that supreme of charioteers.¹²⁰ Kounteya, the destroyer of enemies, swiftly climbed onto that chariot. He advanced towards Kalinga, exclaiming, ‘Wait. Wait.’ At this, the powerful Shrutayu was enraged and displaying the dexterity of his hands, despatched sharp arrows at Bhima. He was pierced by nine sharp arrows released from that supreme bow. O king! Having been thus wounded with force by Kalinga, the immensely famous Bhima was like a serpent that had been struck with a staff. Partha Bhima, the supreme among strong ones, was enraged and stretching his bow, killed the king of Kalinga with seven iron arrows. With razor-like arrows, he despatched Satyadeva and Satya, the protectors of the chariot wheels of the immensely strong Kalinga, to Yama’s abode. In that battle, Bhima, the one whose soul is immeasurable, then used iron arrows and sharp weapons to send Ketuman to Yama’s abode.

“The kshatriyas in the Kalinga army, with many thousands of soldiers, became wrathful and attacked the intolerant Bhimasena. O king! The Kalinga surrounded Bhimasena with lances, clubs, swords, spikes,

scimitars¹²¹ and battleaxes. They enveloped him with a terrible shower of arrows. However, though enveloped, the immensely strong Bhima swiftly grasped a club and sent seven hundred warriors to Yama's abode. The destroyer of enemies again sent two thousand Kalingas to the world of the dead and this was extraordinary. In that battle, the brave Bhima,¹²² great in his vows, repeatedly killed the Kalinga soldiers. The great-souled Pandava robbed elephants of their riders. They were wounded with arrows and wandered around shrieking, like clouds struck by the wind, trampling their own soldiers. The powerful and mighty-armed Bhima blew on his conch shell and the hearts of all the Kalinga soldiers trembled. O scorcher of enemies! The Kalingas were overcome by confusion. O king! The soldiers and all the mounts trembled, as Bhima roamed around everywhere in that field of battle, like an Indra among elephants. He dashed around, following many different paths and repeatedly leaping up. Terrified of Bhimasena, confusion was engendered in the soldiers and they trembled, like a large lake that is agitated by a crocodile. Frightened by Bhima's extraordinary deeds, the brave ones fled in all directions and were then rallied again.

“Parshata, the commander of the army of the sons of Pandu, told his soldiers to fight with all the Kalinga warriors. On hearing the words of the general, the cohorts, with Shikhandi at the forefront, came to help Bhima, with masses of chariots and warriors. Pandava Dharmaraja followed all of them, on the back of a large number of elephants with the complexion of clouds. Thus urging his own soldiers, Parshata, surrounded by many virtuous men, went to guard Bhimasena's flanks. To the king of Panchala,¹²³ there was no one in the world as beloved as Bhima and Satyaki and he was engaged in their welfare. The mighty-armed Parshata, the destroyer of enemy warriors, saw that Bhimasena, the destroyer of enemies, was roaming around amidst the Kalingas. O king! The scorcher of enemies uttered many large shouts. In that battle, he blew on his conch shell and roared like a lion. On seeing that gold-embellished chariot to which horses with the colour of pigeons were yoked and the red standard,

Bhimasena was assured. On seeing Bhimasena, immeasurable in his soul, attacked by the Kalingas, Dhrishtadyumna advanced to his rescue. Beholding Satyaki from a distance, Dhrishtadyumna and Vrikodara, the spirited and brave ones, began to fight with the Kalingas in that battle. Swiftly advancing there, Shini's descendant,¹²⁴ supreme among victorious ones and a bull among men, started to protect Partha and Parshata's flanks. He grasped his bow and arrows and created havoc there. In that encounter, he adopted a terrible form and killed the enemy. Bhima caused a river of blood to flow there, with mud created by the flesh and blood of the Kalingas. The immensely strong Bhimasena traversed the impassable river that flowed between the armies of the Kalingas and the Pandavas. O king! On seeing the enraged Bhimasena there, the soldiers exclaimed, 'In Bhima's form, this is death itself that is fighting with the Kalingas.' Hearing their loud cries in battle, Bhishma, Shantanu's son, swiftly advanced towards Bhima, surrounded by battle formations and soldiers.

“Satyaki, Bhimasena and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna advanced towards Bhishma's gold-embellished chariot. In that encounter, they surrounded Gangeya from all sides and without losing any time, each of them pierced Bhishma with three terrible arrows. But your father Devavrata, the great archer, pierced all of the striving ones back in return, using straight-tufted arrows. Having countered those maharathas with thousands of arrows, he used his arrows to kill Bhima's horses, which were clad in golden armour. Although his horses were slain, the powerful Bhimasena remained stationed on his chariot. He powerfully hurled a spear towards Gangeya's chariot. But in that battle, before that spear could reach him, your father Devavrata sliced it into three and it fell down on the ground. O bull among men! Bhimasena then grasped a large and heavy club made out of steel¹²⁵ and leapt down from his chariot. Desiring to do that which would bring pleasure to Bhima, Satyaki used his arrows to swiftly bring down the aged Kuru's charioteer. When his charioteer was killed, Bhishma, supreme among charioteers, was borne away from the field of battle by horses that

were as fleet as the wind. O king! When the one who is great in his vows was thus carried away, Bhimasena blazed, like a fire consuming dry grass. He remained stationed in the midst of the Kalinga soldiers and killed them all. O bull among the Bharata lineage! No one from your side dared to oppose him. Dhrishtadyumna took up that supreme of charioteers on his own chariot. In the sight of all the soldiers, he took away that famous one. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Honoured by the Panchalas and the Matsyas, he embraced Dhrishtadyumna and then went to Satyaki. Satyaki, for whom his valour is truth, delightedly told Bhimasena, while Dhrishtadyumna, tiger among men, looked on, ‘It is through good fortune that the king of Kalinga, the princes Ketuman and Shakradeva of Kalinga and all the Kalingas have been slain in battle. They possessed many elephants, horses and chariots. The Kalingas possessed large battle formations. But through the valour of your own arms, they have been vanquished by you single-handedly.’ Having said this, Shini’s long-armed descendant, the destroyer of enemies, swiftly ascended onto the chariot and embraced Pandava. Then the maharatha again climbed onto his own chariot and angrily began to kill those on your side, thus increasing Bhima’s strength.””

CHAPTER 911(51)

‘Sanjaya said, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the forenoon of that day had passed, and when there was a great destruction of chariots, elephants, infantry and horse-riders, Panchala fought with three maharathas—Drona’s son, Shalya and the great-souled Kripa. With ten sharp and swift arrows, Panchala’s immensely strong heir¹²⁶ killed the horses of Drona’s son, which were renowned in the world. Deprived of his mounts, Drona’s son swiftly ascended Shalya’s chariot and showered arrows on Panchala’s heir. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing that Dhrishtadyumna was engaged in a duel with Drona’s son, Subhadra’s son quickly attacked, showering sharp arrows. O bull among men! He pierced Shalya with twenty-five arrows, Kripa with nine and Ashvatthama

with eight. However, Drona's son also quickly pierced Arjuna's son with shafted arrows. Shalya pierced him with twelve and Kripa with three sharp arrows. On seeing that your grandson was thus engaged in battle, your grandson Lakshmana rushed at him in great anger and there was an encounter between the two.¹²⁷ O king! In that battle, Duryodhana's son angrily pierced Subhadra's son with nine arrows and it was an extraordinary sight. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O king! Abhimanyu was filled with ire and with dextrous hands, pierced his brother with five hundred arrows. At this, Lakshmana used shafted arrows to slice down his¹²⁸ bow at the handle. O great king! On seeing this, the people raised a loud shout. Then Subhadra's son, the destroyer of enemies, discarded that shattered bow and picked up another bow that was more beautiful and stronger. Those two bulls among men happily fought against each other, countering each other's efforts and piercing each other with sharp and shafted arrows. On seeing that his maharatha son was thus assailed by your grandson, King Duryodhana, lord of men, rushed towards the spot. When your son advanced, all the kings used masses of chariots to surround Arjuna's son from every direction. O king! But he was a brave and invincible warrior, equal in valour to Krishna. Despite being surrounded by those heroes, he was not distressed.

“On seeing that Subhadra's son was fighting there, Dhananjaya swiftly advanced there, intending to save his son. With chariots, elephants and horses and with Bhishma and Drona at the forefront, all the kings forcefully attacked Savyasachi. A thick dust suddenly arose from the ground, raised by the elephants, horses, chariots and infantry and it seemed to obstruct the path of the sun. When those thousands of elephants and hundreds of kings approached within striking distance of his¹²⁹ arrows, none of them could advance any further. All the beings lamented loudly and all the directions were covered in darkness. The army of the Kurus seemed to be terrible and dreadful. O foremost among the Bharata lineage! Because of the numerous arrows shot by Kiriti, the sky, the directions, the earth or the sun could not be seen. Elephants were deprived

of the standards on their backs. Many charioteers were deprived of their horses. Having been deprived of their chariots, many charioteers were seen to be wandering around there. Other charioteers discarded their chariots and were seen to flee. They were seen there, weapons in their hands and with bracelets on their upper arms. O king! Because of their fear of Arjuna, horse-riders gave up their horses and elephant-riders their elephants. They fled in all the directions. The kings were seen to fall down from their chariots, elephants and horses. They were seen to fall down, oppressed by Arjuna. O lord of the earth! Assuming a terrible form there, Arjuna used his terrible arrows to cut down the upraised arms of men who held clubs, swords, lances, quivers, bows, arrows, goads and standards. O venerable one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Heavy maces and clubs, lances, catapults, swords, sharp battleaxes, javelins, shields and armour were shattered in that battle and fell down on the ground. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Flags, shields, many kinds of whisks, umbrellas, golden rods and tassels were strewn around. O venerable one! There were whips, halters, thongs and reins. They were seen to be scattered on the field of battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There was not a single man in your army who could advance against the brave Arjuna in battle. O lord of the earth! In that encounter, whoever advanced against Partha was pierced by sharp and shafted arrows and conveyed to the world of the dead. When all the warriors on your side were scattered, Arjuna and Vasudeva blew on their supreme conch shells.

““On seeing that the army had been shattered in that battle, your father, Devavrata, smiled and told Bharadvaja’s brave son, ‘This brave and powerful son of Pandu is united with Krishna. He is dealing with our soldiers only as Dhananjaya can. No one is capable of vanquishing him in battle today. His form seems to be like that of the destroyer at the end of an era. It is impossible to rally our great army now. Behold. They are looking at each other and are running away. The sun can be seen aloft the supreme mountain Asta.¹³⁰ It is as if it has robbed the sight of the entire world. O bull among men! I think the time has come for retreat. The warriors are exhausted and frightened and will never fight.’ Having spoken

thus to the supreme preceptor Drona, maharatha Bhishma arranged that your army should be withdrawn. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Your soldiers, and those of the others, were withdrawn. The sun set and evening set in.”

CHAPTER 912(52)

‘Sanjaya said, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When night had passed and it was morning, Shantanu’s son, Bhishma, instructed that a battle formation should be created. Wishing to ensure victory for your sons, Shantanu’s son, Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, formed the great vyuha known as Garuda. Your father Devavrata stationed himself on Garuda’s mouth and Bharadvaja’s son and Satvata Kritavarma were the eyes. Ashvatthama and the famous Kripa were the head, supported by Trigartas, Matsyas, Kekayas and Vatadhanas. O venerable one! Bhurishrava, Shala, Shalya, Bhagadatta, Madrakas, Sindhus, Souviras and those from the land of the five rivers, together with Jayadratha, constituted the neck. King Duryodhana, together with his brothers and followers, constituted the back. O great king! Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti, together with the Kambojas and the Shakas and the Shurasenas, constituted the tail. Magadhas and Kalingas, together with masses of Dasherakas, were armoured and stationed themselves on the right wing of the vyuha. Kananas, Vikunjas, Muktas, Pundravishas, together with Brihadbala, were stationed on the left wing.

“On seeing this battle formation of your soldiers, Savyasachi, the scorcher of enemies, together with Dhrishtadyumna, arranged a counter vyuha for the encounter. This vyuha was in the form of a half-moon and this vyuha was extremely terrible. Bhimasena stationed himself on the right horn. He was surrounded by kings from many countries, wielding many different kinds of weapons. Maharatha Virata and Drupada were next to him. Next to him was Nila, accompanied by Nilayudha. Next to Nila was maharatha Dhrishtaketu. He was surrounded by the Chedis, the Kashis, the Karusha and the Pouravas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Dhrishtadyumna, Shikhandi, the Panchalas and the Prabhadrakas

were stationed in the midst of the large army, ready for battle. Dharmaraja was also there, surrounded by an army of elephants. O king! Satyaki was also there, together with Droupadi's five sons. Abhimanyu was there and beyond him was Iravan. O king! Bhimasena's son¹³¹ was there, together with the maharatha Kekayas. Next to him, on the left flank, was the foremost of men.¹³² His protector was Janardana, the protector of the entire universe. It was thus that the Pandavas formed a giant vyuha as a counter vyuha, for the death of your sons and of those who have assembled on your side. The battle between those on your side and those of the enemy then commenced, seeking to kill each other in a melee of chariots and elephants. O lord of the earth! Masses of horses and masses of chariots were seen there. They were seen to descend on each other, seeking to kill each other. Masses of chariots dashed towards each other, or engaged each other individually. They created a tumultuous sound, mixed with the sound of drums. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As they sought to kill each other in that tumultuous battle, the shouts of the brave men on your side, and on theirs, seemed to touch heaven.”

CHAPTER 913(53)

‘Sanjaya said, “Your soldiers and those of the others were arranged in battle formation. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! After that, Dhananjaya slaughtered a large number of charioteers on your side. In that battle, he used his arrows to bring down large numbers of charioteers. They were thus killed by Partha, like death at the time of the destruction of a yuga. But in that encounter, the sons of Dhritarashtra endeavoured to repulse the Pandavas. They strove for blazing fame and preferred death to retreat. O king! Thus single-minded in their objective in that battle, they broke through the Pandava ranks in many places and were themselves broken. Both the Pandava and the Kourava were broken and fled, reassembling again. Nothing could be seen. A cloud of dust arose from the ground and shrouded the sun. No one was in a position to distinguish the directions or the sub-directions. The battle raged everywhere, through

inferences drawn on the basis of signs, names and family names.¹³³

However, in that encounter, the vyuha of the Kouravas was protected by Bharadvaja's intelligent son, who was devoted to the truth, and it could not be broken. In that fashion, nor could the great vyuha of the Pandavas, protected by Savyasachi and guarded well by Bhima.

“O king! Men, infantry, chariots and elephants emerged from the heads of both the armies and engaged in fighting with each other. In that great battle, those riding horses brought down those riding horses, using polished and sharp swords and lances in that encounter. In that terrible battle, charioteers used gold-decorated arrows to bring down charioteers. Those riding on elephants used iron arrows, arrows and spikes against those riding on elephants and used these to bring each other down. In that battle, large numbers of infantry engaged against infantry and happily cut each other down with catapults and battleaxes. In that battle, in both the armies, infantry brought down charioteers and charioteers brought down infantry, using sharp weapons. Those riding elephants brought down those riding horses. Those riding horses brought down those stationed on elephants and it was extraordinary. Here and there, the supreme among those riding on elephants brought down foot soldiers and warriors riding on elephants were seen to be brought down by them in return. Large numbers of infantry were slaughtered by those riding horses and large numbers of those riding horses were brought down by foot soldiers. They were seen to be brought down in hundreds and thousands. O foremost among the Bharata lineage! The ground was strewn with destroyed standards, bows, lances, javelins, clubs, maces, *kampanas*,¹³⁴ spears, colourful armour, *kanapas*,¹³⁵ goads, polished swords, gold-shafted arrows, cushions, carpets and extremely expensive coverlets and seemed to be strewn with garlands of flowers. In that great battle, the bodies of men, horses and fallen elephants made the ground impassable and mud was created by flesh and blood. The dust that had arisen from the ground settled down because of the blood from the battle. O lord of men! Because of this, the directions again became clearly visible. O descendant of the

Bharata lineage! Many headless torsos were seen to arise from the ground, as a portent that all the beings in the universe would be destroyed. In that extremely terrible and fearful battle, charioteers could be seen to flee in every direction.

“Bhishma, Drona, Saindhava Jayadratha, Purumitra, Vikarna and Shakuni Soubala were invincible in battle and were like lions in their valour. They repeatedly broke the Pandava ranks in battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that way, Bhimasena, the rakshasa Ghatotkacha, Satyaki, Chekitana and Droupadi’s sons oppressed your sons, together with all the kings, like the gods against the danavas. Those bulls among kshatriyas killed each other in that battle. Drenched in battle, they assumed terrible forms, like dazzling danavas. In both the armies, brave ones triumphed over their enemies and seemed to be like the best of planets in the firmament. With one thousand chariots, your son Duryodhana advanced to do battle with the Pandavas and the rakshasa Ghatotkacha. All the Pandavas, together with a large army, advanced to do battle with Drona and Bhishma, the brave scorchers of enemies. The enraged Kiriti advanced against the best of kings. Arjuna’s son and Satyaki advanced against Soubala’s army. An extremely terrible battle commenced between those on your side and those of the enemy, each trying to defeat the other, and it made the body hair stand up.”

CHAPTER 914(54)

‘Sanjaya said, “The kings were angry and saw Phalguna in that battle. They surrounded him on all sides with many thousands of chariots. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having surrounded him with a large number of chariots, they enveloped him in all directions with many thousands of arrows. Enraged in battle, they hurled polished and sharp lances, clubs, maces, javelins, battleaxes, bludgeons and pestles towards Phalguna’s chariot. That shower of weapons descended on him like a flight of locusts. But Partha countered all of them with gold-decorated arrows. O Indra among kings! On witnessing Bibhatsu’s superhuman lightness of hand, the gods, the danavas, the gandharvas, the pishachas, the serpents

and the rakshasas honoured Phalguna with words of praise. With a large army and together with Soubala, the brave ones from the land of Gandhara surrounded Satyaki and Abhimanyu in that battle. With many different kinds of weapons, the angry ones who were on Soubala's side wrathfully cut down Varshneya's supreme chariot into tiny fragments.¹³⁶ In that extremely fearful battle, Satyaki abandoned his chariot and the scorcher of enemies swiftly ascended onto Abhimanyu's chariot. Stationed on the same chariot, they swiftly countered Soubala's army and pierced it with many sharp and straight-tufted arrows. In that battle, Drona and Bhishma made endeavours to fight with Dharmaraja's army. They destroyed it with sharp arrows tufted with the feathers of herons. In the sight of all the soldiers, the king who was Dharma's son and the Pandavas who were Madri's sons began to oppress Drona's army. The great battle that was fought was tumultuous and made the body hair stand up. It was like the extremely terrible battle that was earlier fought between the gods and the asuras. Bhimasena and Ghatotkacha performed extremely great deeds. Then Duryodhana arrived and repulsed both of them. We witnessed the valour displayed by Hidimba's son¹³⁷ and it was extraordinary. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When he fought, he surpassed his father in battle. Pandava Bhimasena was enraged. He smiled and pierced the intolerant Duryodhana in the chest with an arrow. At this, King Duryodhana lost his senses from this blow. He sank down on his chariot and fainted. O king! On seeing that he had lost his senses, the charioteer swiftly carried him away from the field of battle and his soldiers ran away. While the Kourava soldiers were running away in all directions, Bhima pursued them and killed them with sharp arrows.

“In Drona's sight and in the sight of Gangeya, Parshata, foremost among charioteers, and the Pandava who was Dharma's son began to slaughter their soldiers with sharp and straight-tufted arrows that were capable of killing the enemy. In that battle, the soldiers of your sons started to run away. O lord of the earth! Maharatha Bhishma and Drona were incapable of restraining them, though Bhishma and Drona did try to

restrain them. While both Drona and Bhishma looked on, the soldiers fled. Thousands of chariots fled in all directions. Subhadra's son and the bull among Shinis were stationed on a single chariot. In that battle, in every direction, they began to slaughter the soldiers of Soubala. Shini's descendant and the bull among the Kurus¹³⁸ were resplendent, like two suns in the firmament after the night of the new moon had passed. O lord of the earth! Arjuna angrily showered down arrows on the soldiers, like clouds pouring down rain. Thus slaughtered in that battle with Partha's arrows, the Kourava soldiers were overcome by sorrow and fright and trembled and ran away. On seeing that the soldiers were running away, maharatha Bhishma and Drona, became angry and having Duryodhana's welfare in mind, tried to restrain them. O lord of the earth! At this, King Duryodhana himself reassured the troops and restrained them from running away in every direction. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Wherever your son could be seen, there the maharatha kshatriyas were restrained. O king! Wherever they were restrained, the ordinary soldiers saw them and were also restrained, ashamed and desiring to rival each other. O lord of the earth! That army was thus forcefully rallied and looked like a full ocean when the moon rises.

“Having seen that the army had been rallied, King Suyodhana swiftly went to Bhishma, Shantanu's son, and spoke these words to him. ‘O grandfather! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Listen to the words I am speaking to you. O Kourava! When you are alive, and so is Drona, supreme among those who are skilled in weapons, together with his son and well-wishers, and so is the great archer Kripa, I do not think it is praiseworthy that my soldiers should flee in this way. I do not think that the Pandavas are a force capable of withstanding you in battle, or Drona, or Drona's son, or Kripa. O grandfather! The Pandavas are certainly being favoured by you. O brave one! That is the reason you are pardoning them this act of killing my soldiers. O king! You should have told me earlier, before this encounter commenced, that you would not fight in a battle with the Pandavas, or with Parshata, or with Satyaki. On hearing your words and those of the preceptor and of Kripa, together with Karna, I would then

have reflected on what should be done. O bulls among men!¹³⁹ If I do not deserve to be abandoned by both of you in this battle, then fight in accordance with your valour.’ Having heard these words, Bhishma laughed repeatedly. His eyes were full of anger and he spoke these words to your son. ‘O king! On many occasions, I have spoken words for your welfare and you should have accepted them. The Pandavas are incapable of being vanquished in battle even by the gods, together with Vasava. O supreme among kings! Though I am aged now, I will do what I am capable of doing and I will do it to the best of my capacity. Behold it with your relatives. While all the worlds look on, I will alone repulse the sons of Pandu now, together with their soldiers and relatives.’ O lord of men! Having been thus addressed by Bhishma, your son was extremely delighted and instructed that conch shells and drums should be sounded. O king! Having heard this loud roar, the Pandavas blew on their conch shells and instructed that drums and tambourines should be sounded.”

CHAPTER 915(55)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “When Bhishma was especially angered and distressed because of my son and took that terrible vow in that battle, what did Bhishma do when he encountered the Pandaveyas. O Sanjaya! Tell me what the Panchalas did to the grandfather.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the forenoon of that day had passed and when the great-souled Pandavas were delighted at having accomplished victory, your father, Devavrata, learned in all kinds of dharma, advanced on the swiftest of steeds towards the army of the Pandavas. He was protected by a large army and by all your sons. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! A tumultuous battle ensued between us and the Pandavas, because you did not follow dharma. It made the body hair stand up. There was the twanging of bows there, as they struck against the palms. A tremendous sound arose and it was capable of splintering mountains. ‘Wait’, ‘I am stationed here’, ‘Know this one’, ‘Retreat’, ‘Be steady’, ‘I am steady here’, ‘Strike’—these were the sounds

that were heard everywhere. Golden body-armour, crowns and standards fell down and it was like the sound of boulders descending on stony ground. Hundreds and thousands of heads and ornamented arms fell down immobile on the ground. With the heads sliced off, some supreme among men still stood, with their bows raised and holding weapons. An extremely swift river of blood began to flow. Its mud was terrible with flesh and blood and the bodies of elephants were like stones in it. The bodies of excellent horses, men and elephants flowed in it then, as it flowed towards the world of the hereafter. It was delightful to vultures and jackals. O king! A battle like this has not been seen earlier, nor heard of. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Such was the one between your sons and the Pandavas. Because of the warriors who had been brought down in battle, chariots could not find a path there. The bodies of fallen elephants were like blue summits of mountains. O venerable one! Strewn with colourful armour, standards and umbrellas, the field of battle was as beautiful as the autumn sky. Though they were oppressed and wounded by arrows, some armoured ones were seen to dash towards the enemy in battle, without any fear. Many who fell down in the battle cried, ‘O father! O brother! O friend! O relative! O companion! O maternal uncle! Do not abandon me.’ There were others who exclaimed, ‘Come here. Why are you frightened? Where are you going? I am stationed in battle. Do not be afraid.’

“Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, was there, his bow always stretched in a circle. He released blazing arrows that were like the venom of virulent snakes. Rigid in his vows, he released arrows in all the directions. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He picked out the Pandava charioteers and killed them. With a dextrous hand, he seemed to be dancing around in the chariot. O king! He could be seen everywhere, like a circle of fire. Though the brave one was alone in that battle, because of his dexterity, the Pandavas and the Srinjayas saw him as many hundreds and thousands. Everyone there thought that Bhishma had used maya on his own self. In one moment, he was seen in the eastern direction. In the next moment, he was seen in the western direction. They saw the lord in the north and immediately saw him in the south. Thus the brave Gangeya was seen in

that battle. There was no one among the Pandaveyas who was capable of glancing at him. They only saw many arrows shot from Bhishma's bow. Having seen him perform such great feats in the battle there, with the slaughter of the army, the brave ones uttered many lamentations. Your father wandered around in superhuman form and driven by destiny, thousands of kings fell down like insects, led to the fire of the angry Bhishma. In that battle, not a single one of Bhishma's arrows failed to be successful, because of the large numbers that were arrayed against him, and descended on the bodies of men, elephants and horses. With a single shafted arrow that was released well, he brought down an armoured elephant, like the vajra shattering a mountain. With an extremely sharp iron arrow, your father killed two or three elephant-riders, armoured and standing together, at a single stroke. Whoever approached Bhishma, tiger among men, in that battle, was seen to be brought down onto the ground in an instant. Thus, Dharmaraja's large army was slaughtered through Bhishma's valour and shattered in a thousand ways. Tormented by the shower of arrows, the large army trembled, while Vasudeva and the great-souled Partha looked on. Though the brave ones made every endeavour, they could not restrain the maharathas who were oppressed by Bhishma's arrows. He slaughtered that large army with a valour that was like that of the great Indra. O great king! It was routed such that no two persons were seen together. Men, elephants and horses were pierced. Standards and axle-shafts fell down. The soldiers of the sons of Pandu lost their senses and lamented. Father killed the son and the son killed the father. Driven by the force of destiny, a friend challenged a beloved friend to a fight. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Many soldiers on the side of the sons of Pandu were seen to run away, with their armour discarded and with their hair dishevelled. The soldiers of the sons of Pandu, and even the leaders among them, were seen to be as confounded as a herd of cattle. They lamented in woe.

“On seeing that the soldiers were routed, Devaki's son¹⁴⁰ stopped that supreme of chariots and spoke to Partha Bibhatsu. ‘O Partha! The hour that you desired, has now arrived. O tiger among men! If you wish to be

free from confusion, strike. O brave one! In earlier times, in the assembly of kings, you had said that you would kill the soldiers of the sons of Dhritarashtra, with Bhishma and Drona at the forefront, with all the relatives and those who wished to fight against you in battle. O Kounteya! O destroyer of enemies! Act accordingly now and make your words come true. O Bibhatsu! Behold. Your army is being driven back in every direction. Behold. All the kings in Yudhishtira's army are running away, on having seen Bhishma in battle, with his mouth gaping open. They are frightened and are being destroyed, like small animals by a lion.' Having been thus addressed, Dhananjaya replied to Vasudeva, 'Drive the horses through this ocean of soldiers to where Bhishma is stationed.' O king! Madhava then drove those silver-white steeds to the place where Bhishma's chariot, which was like the sun and was difficult to look at, was stationed. Having seen the mighty-armed Partha advance to fight in the battle against Bhishma, Yudhishtira's great army rallied again.

“Bhishma, foremost among the Kurus, roared repeatedly, like a lion. He swiftly enveloped Dhananjaya's chariot with a shower of arrows. In an instant, with the horses and with the charioteer, the chariot disappeared. It was covered by that great shower of arrows and could no longer be seen. But the spirited Vasudeva was not agitated. Though the horses had been wounded by Bhishma's arrows, he patiently continued to drive them. Partha picked up his divine bow, with a twang that was like the clap of thunder. He sliced down Bhishma's bow with three arrows. With his bow sliced down, your father Kouravya again picked up a large bow and strung it in the twinkling of an eye. He drew the bow with his two hands and its twang was like the roar of the clouds. But the enraged Arjuna sliced down that bow too. At this, Shantanu's son applauded his dexterity. 'O Partha! O mighty-armed one! O descendant of Pandu! Wonderful. O Dhananjaya! Such a great deed is deserving of you. O son! I am pleased with you. Fight hard with me now.' Having thus praised Partha and having grasped another large bow, in that battle, the brave one released arrows towards Partha's chariot. Vasudeva displayed his supreme skill in handling horses. By driving around in swift circles, he avoided all those arrows. O venerable

one! However, with great force, Bhishma used sharp arrows to pierce Vasudeva and Dhananjaya all over their bodies. Thus wounded by Bhishma's arrows, those two tigers among men were adorned like two roaring bulls, with the scratches of thorns on them. Yet again, extremely angry, Bhishma used straight-tufted arrows to cover the two Krishnas¹⁴¹ on every side. Though enraged, Bhishma repeatedly smiled and used his sharp arrows to make Varshneya tremble and wonder.

“Krishna witnessed Bhishma's valour in battle and saw the mildness with which the mighty-armed Partha countered him. In that encounter, Bhishma created an incessant shower of arrows. In the midst of the two armies, he was like the tormenting sun. He was killing the best of the best among the soldiers of Pandu's son. Bhishma was like the fire of destruction amidst Yudhishthira's army. The lord Keshava, the destroyer of enemy heroes, could no longer tolerate this. The one with the immeasurable soul thought that Yudhishthira's army would not be able to survive. In a battle, Bhishma was capable of destroying the gods and the danavas in a single day, not to speak of taking on the sons of Pandu, with their soldiers and their followers, in a fight. The large army of the great-souled Pandava began to flee. Having seen the Somakas shattered and fleeing in that battle, the Kouravas were delighted and advanced to the fight, gladdening the grandfather. He¹⁴² thought, ‘For the welfare of the Pandavas, I will armour myself and kill Bhishma today. I will relieve the burden of the great-souled Pandavas. Though Arjuna has been struck with sharp arrows in this battle, he does not know his duty in this encounter, on account of the respect he has for Bhishma.’ While he was reflecting in this way, the wrathful grandfather again unleashed arrows towards Partha's chariot. Because of the many arrows that were flying around, all the directions were enveloped. The sky, the directions and the earth could not be seen. Nor could the sun, the possessor of the rays, be seen. The tumultuous wind seemed to be mixed with smoke. All the directions were agitated.

“Drona, Vikarna, Jayadratha, Bhurishrava, Kritavarma, Kripa, Shrutayu, the lord and king of Ambashtha,¹⁴³ Vinda and Anuvinda, Sudakshina, those from the east, all the large numbers of Souviras, the Vasatayas, the Kshudrakas and the Malavas—on the instructions of the king who was Shantanu’s son, all of these swiftly advanced to do battle with Kiriti. Shini’s grandson saw that Kiriti was surrounded by a net with hundreds and thousands of horses, infantry and chariots and a large number of elephants. Shini’s brave descendant, foremost among the wielders of arms, swiftly advanced to where the soldiers were, wielding a giant bow. The brave one from Shini’s lineage suddenly arrived to aid Arjuna, like Vishnu helping the destroyer of Vritra. The elephants, horses, chariots and standards were shattered and all the warriors were frightened by Bhishma. Yudhishtira’s soldiers were running away. On seeing this, Shini’s brave descendant said, ‘O kshatriyas! Where are you going? This is not the dharma of virtuous men, as it has been recounted in the ancient texts. O brave ones! Do not forsake your oaths. Follow the dharma of those who are brave.’ Vasava’s younger brother¹⁴⁴ was unable to tolerate the act of the foremost among the kings running away. In that battle, he saw that Bhishma was exerting all his powers, that Partha was mild and that the Kurus were advancing from every direction.

“Unable to tolerate it, the great-souled and illustrious one, the protector of all the Dasharhas, spoke approvingly to Shini’s descendant. ‘O brave descendant of the Shini lineage! Those who are running away, are indeed running away. O Satvata! Let those who are still here, also flee. Behold. In this battle, I will today bring down Bhishma from his chariot and also Drona and all their followers. O Satvata! There is no charioteer among the Kouravas who will escape when I am enraged in battle today. I will grasp the terrible chakra and rob the one who is great in his vows, of his life.¹⁴⁵ O descendant of Shini! I will kill Bhishma and his followers and Drona, the foremost among charioteers. I will act so as to bring pleasure to Dhananjaya, the king,¹⁴⁶ Bhima and the two Ashvins.¹⁴⁷ I will kill all the sons of Dhritarashtra and the foremost among kings who are on their side.

In a cheerful frame of mind, I will today give the kingdom to King Ajatashatru.’ Having said this, Vasudeva’s son discarded the reins of the chariot and raised the chakra in his hand. It possessed an excellent handle and was like the sun in its radiance. It was like the vajra in its power. The great-souled one made the earth tremble with his footsteps. With great force, Krishna rushed towards Bhishma. The great Indra’s younger brother was angry. He rushed towards Bhishma, as he was stationed in the midst of his troops. He was like a lion that wished to kill a king of the elephants. He was blind in his anger and agitated in his pride. The ends of his yellow garments trailed in the air and looked like a cloud charged with lightning in the sky. Sudarshana looked like a glorious lotus, with Shouri’s beautiful arm as the stalk. It was like the original lotus, as resplendent as the morning sun, which emerged from Narayana’s navel.¹⁴⁸ Krishna’s anger was like the rising sun that caused the lotus to bloom and its beautiful petals were as sharp as a razor. On seeing that the great Indra’s younger brother was angry and roaring and that he was wielding the chakra, all the beings shrieked in lamentation. They thought that the destruction of the Kurus was nigh. Having grasped the chakra, Vasudeva looked like the fire of destruction that consumes the world of the living. The preceptor of the worlds arose like the fire of destruction that would destroy all beings. On seeing the god, foremost among men, advance with the chakra, Shantanu’s son remained fearlessly stationed on his chariot, with the bow and arrows in his hand. He said, ‘O lord of the gods! O one whose abode is the universe! O wielder of the Sharnga bow! O one with the chakra in your hand! Come. I am bowing down before you. O protector of the worlds! Bring me down from this supreme chariot. You are the wonderful refuge of everyone in a battle. O Krishna! If I am killed by you today, I will obtain supreme welfare in this world and in the next. O protector of the Andhakas and the Vrishnis! You have shown me great honour and my valour will be celebrated in the three worlds.’ However, Partha swiftly descended from his chariot and ran after the foremost of the Yadus. With his thick and long arms, he seized Hari’s large and thick arms. The original god, whose name is the great yogi, was consumed by great wrath. Though he was seized in

this way, Vishnu dragged Jishnu after him with great force, like a great storm carries away a tree. But as he was swiftly advancing towards Bhishma, Partha forcibly grasped him by the feet. O king! Thus grasping him with force, Kiriti succeeded in stopping him at the tenth step. When Krishna had stopped, bedecked with a beautiful and golden garland, Arjuna happily bowed down before him and said, ‘O Keshava! You are the refuge of the Pandavas. Control your anger. O Keshava! I swear in the names of my sons and brothers that I will not deviate from the acts that I have promised to carry out. O younger brother of Indra! Instructed by you, I will certainly destroy the Kurus.’ Hearing the promise and the pledge, Janardana was happy and was pacified. He was always engaged in the welfare of the supreme among the Kouravas.¹⁴⁹ With the chakra, he again ascended on the chariot.

“The slayer of enemies again grasped the reins. Shouri grasped his conch shell Panchajanya and blew on it, making the directions resound with its roar. The foremost among the Kurus saw him, adorned with a necklace, armlets and earrings. His curved eyelashes were smeared with dust. With gleaming teeth, he grasped the conch shell and they set up a loud cry. Tambourines, drums, kettledrums and smaller drums began to sound, mixed with the sound of chariot wheels. Lion-like terrible roars were uttered among the Kuru soldiers. There was the roar of Partha’s Gandiva, ascending into the sky and the directions like the clap of thunder. The bright and polished arrows released from Pandava’s bow covered all the directions. Together with Bhishma and Bhurishrava and an army, the lord of the Kouravas¹⁵⁰ advanced against him. He held raised arrows in his hand and was like a fire¹⁵¹ that would consume dry wood. Bhurishrava shot seven gold-tufted and broad arrows at Arjuna. Duryodhana hurled an extremely forceful lance, Shalya a club and Shantanu’s son a spear. But he used seven arrows to counter the seven supreme arrows shot by Bhurishrava. With a razor-sharp arrow, he countered the lance that had been released from Duryodhana’s hand. Shantanu’s son had hurled a spear at him, as resplendent as lightning. But as it descended, the brave one used

two arrows to cut this down and also the club that had been released from the arms of the king of Madra. He used the strength of his two arms to draw the beautiful bow Gandiva, whose energy was immeasurable. In accordance with the prescriptions, he invoked the extremely terrible and wonderful weapon of the great Indra and made it appear in the sky. The great-souled and great archer, Kiriti, used that weapon to counter all the soldiers. It showered down a mass of polished arrows, with the complexion of the fire. The many arrows that were released from Partha's bow cut down chariots, standards and bows and the arms that held them. They penetrated the bodies of the enemy kings, the gigantic elephants and the large number of horses. Having covered all the directions and the sub-directions with his extremely sharp arrows, Partha created terror in their minds with the twang of Gandiva. Thus did Kiriti oppress them and as that terrible encounter raged, the sounds of conch shells and kettledrums were surpassed by Gandiva's roar.

““When they got to know the sound of Gandiva, the brave ones among men, with King Virata at the forefront, and the valiant King Drupada of Panchala, went to the spot, with uplifted hearts. But wherever the sound of Gandiva was heard, all your soldiers were immersed in despair there and not a single one would venture forth. In that extremely terrible slaughter of kings, many brave ones were slain, together with their chariots and charioteers. Elephants were tormented and brought down with iron arrows, with their giant banners and seats made out of pure gold. They lost their lives and were suddenly brought down, their bodies mangled by Kiriti. Partha used a firm hand to bring them down with the force of his sharp, polished and broad-headed arrows. The implements of war were shattered, the fortifications were destroyed. In that battle, Dhananjaya brought down large standards and the best of pennants and large numbers of infantry, chariots, horses and elephants. Struck by the arrows, they lost their lives. Their bodies became immobile and they fell down on the ground. O king! In that great battle, their armour and their bodies were mangled by the supreme weapon named after Indra. With a flood of sharp arrows, Kiriti made an extremely terrible river flow on the field of battle. The blood was

the bodies of men wounded by weapons. The foam was human fat. Its expanse was broad and it flowed swiftly. The banks were formed by the dead bodies of elephants and horses. The mud was the entrails, marrow and flesh of men. Many hordes of rakshasas and demons populated it. The moss was formed by heads, with the hair attached. Thousands of bodies were borne in the flow and the waves were formed by many shattered fragments of armour. The bones of men, horses and elephants were the stones. A large number of crows, jackals, vultures and herons and many predatory beasts like hyenas were seen to line up along its banks, as that terrible and destructive river flowed towards the nether regions. That terrible river was as cruel as the great Vaitarani.¹⁵² Created through the masses of Arjuna's arrows, that extremely fearful river conveyed fat, marrow and blood.

“The Chedis, the Panchalas, the Karushas and the Matsyas, together with all the Parthas, began to roar. The soldiers and leaders of the army¹⁵³ were terrified, like a herd of deer at the sight of a lion. The wielder of the Gandiva and Janardana roared in great delight. The Kurus, together with Bhishma, Drona, Duryodhana and Bahlika, saw that Indra's terrible weapon had extended everywhere and was like the end of a yuga. Their limbs were sorely wounded from the weapon and they saw the sun was withdrawing its rays. They saw that twilight was near and that the sun was streaked with red. They decided to withdraw. Having performed deeds and won fame in the world, Dhananjaya had triumphed over the enemies. Having completed his tasks, together with his brothers, the lord of men retired to his camp for the night. When night set in, there was a terrible and great uproar among the Kurus. ‘In the battle, Arjuna has killed ten thousand charioteers and seven hundred elephants. All those from the eastern regions, all the masses of Souviras, the Kshudrakas and the Malavas have been brought down. Dhananjaya has accomplished a great deed. No one else is capable of accomplishing this. O king!’¹⁵⁴ King Shrutayu, the lord of Ambashtha, Durmarshana, Chitrasena, Drona, Kripa, Saindhava, Bahlika, Bhurishrava, Shalya and Shala, together with

Bhishma, have been vanquished by Kiriti, the maharatha of the world, through the valour of his own arms.’ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having spoken these words, all those who were on your side went to their camps. There were thousands of torches to bring illumination and many beautiful lamps. All the warriors and leaders among the Kurus settled down for the night, terrified of Kiriti.””

CHAPTER 916(56)

‘Sanjaya said, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When night had passed, the great-souled Bhishma was full of anger. Placing himself at the head of the Bharata army and surrounded by a large number of troops, he advanced against the enemy. Drona, Duryodhana, Bahlika, Durmarshana, Chitrasena and the extremely strong Jayadratha, and many other powerful kings with their armies, surrounded him on all sides. O king! Surrounded by these great maharathas, all of whom possessed energy and valour, that supreme of kings was radiant at the forefront of those kings, like the wielder of the vajra when he is surrounded by the gods. Giant standards fluttered on the backs of mighty elephants stationed in front of the troops. They were beautiful and colourful—red, yellow, black and brown. That army had the king who was Shantanu’s son, maharathas, elephants and horses. It was as dazzling as clouds tinged with lightning, or the sky when clouds gather at the onset of the monsoon. Protected by Shantanu’s son, that great and large army of the Kurus suddenly rushed towards Arjuna to do battle, like a terrible and flowing river. It possessed diverse kinds of powerful forces, with innumerable elephants, horses, infantry and chariots along the sides. The vyuha was like a giant cloud. From a distance, the great-souled one with the king of apes on his standard saw it.¹⁵⁵ The brave bull among men, with the white horses, was stationed on his chariot with the tall standard. The great-souled one was at the head of a large army and advanced against all the forces of the enemy. He possessed excellent equipment and the shaft of the chariot was supreme. In that

battle, he was aided by the bull among the Yadus. On seeing the ape on the standard, all the Kouravas, together with your sons, were dejected.

“They saw that the king of vyuhas was protected by Kiriti, the maharatha of this world, with his weapons upraised. There were four thousand elephants at each of its four corners. This vyuha was like the one that had been prepared the preceding day by Dharmaraja, the descendant of the Kourava lineage. The foremost among the Panchalas and the foremost among the Chedis advanced towards the spot. A great roar arose from every direction and thousands of drums were sounded. There was the blowing of conch shells, mixed with the sounds of drums. All the soldiers roared like lions. As the brave ones twanged their bows, there was the great sound of arrows. In an instant, the sky was filled with the loud sound of drums, kettledrums and cymbals and the great noise of conch shells being blown. Enveloped in that sound, the sky was also covered by fine dust that arose from the ground. On seeing that canopy spread all over, the brave warriors dashed forwards to battle each other. Rathas were brought down by rathas, together with their charioteers, horses, chariots and standards. Elephants were struck and brought down by elephants. Infantry was brought down by infantry. Those who advanced were brought down by others who advanced. The wounds from the arrows were wonderful to behold. Lances and swords fell down. Well-trained horses clashed against well-trained horses. The brave ones held excellent shields marked with the signs of golden stars and used them against excellent arrows. These were shattered by battleaxes, lances and swords and fell down on the ground. Some rathas and their charioteers were mangled by the tusks and mighty trunks of elephants and fell down. Bulls among elephant-riders clashed against bulls among rathas and killed by arrows, fell down on the ground. Having heard the wails of horse-riders struck by the force of elephants or the lamentations of horse-riders and infantry whose limbs were crushed by the tusks of elephants, many men were distressed and fell down.

“Many elephants, horses and chariots were running away and there was a great terror among the horse-riders and infantry. Bhishma, surrounded by maharathas, saw the one who had the king of apes on his standard.

Shantanu's son had a palm tree on his standard, embellished with the marks of five palm trees. He rushed against the valiant Kiriti, who possessed well-trained and swift horses and great weapons and arrows with the resplendence of the vajra. O king! Many other warriors, with Drona, Kripa, Shalya, Vivimshati, Duryodhana and Somadatta's son at the forefront, advanced against Indra's son, who was like Shakra himself. Arjuna's brave son, Abhimanyu, was skilled in the knowledge of all weapons and was clad in golden and colourful armour. He rushed out from the mass of rathas and attacked. He confounded the great weapons of all those maharathas. Karshni¹⁵⁶ performed deeds that were incapable of being countered. He was like the illustrious fire on a sacrificial altar, when the one with the flames has been invoked with great mantras. In that battle, the spirited Bhishma swiftly created a river, with the blood of enemies as the foam. But he avoided Subhadra's son and attacked maharatha Partha. Kiriti grasped Gandiva, extraordinary to behold. Its roar was exceedingly loud. He cast out a net of arrows and repulsed the net of great weapons.¹⁵⁷ The supreme among all wielders of the bow, with the king of apes on his standard, then showered down a net of arrows and polished and broad-headed arrows on the great-souled Bhishma. All the worlds, the Kurus and the Srinjayas, witnessed the duel between Bhishma and Dhananjaya, the two spirited ones who were the foremost among virtuous men, accompanied by the terrible roars of the bows.”

CHAPTER 917(57)

‘Sanjaya said, “O venerable one! Drona's son, Bhurishrava, Shalya, Chitrasena¹⁵⁸ and Samyamani's son¹⁵⁹ fought with Subhadra's son. While he was fighting with these five tigers among men alone, people saw that he was extremely energetic and was like a young lion against elephants. No one was equal to Krishna's son¹⁶⁰ in sureness of aim, courage, valour, knowledge of weapons and dexterity. When Partha saw his son, the scorcher of enemies, thus displaying his valour in that battle, he uttered a roar like a lion. O lord of the earth! O Indra among kings!

Having seen your grandson oppress your soldiers in this way, those on your side surrounded him from all directions. But Subhadra's son, the destroyer of enemies, was not dispirited. Using his energy and strength, he attacked the sons of Dhritarashtra. When he was fighting with the enemy in that battle and using his large bow, he was like the sun in radiance and was seen to use dextrous moves. He pierced Drona's son with one arrow and Shalya with five. He sliced down the standard of Samyamani's son with eight. Somadatta's son¹⁶¹ hurled a gold-shafted and giant lance at him and it was like a serpent. But he cut it down with sharp arrows. Arjuna's heir repulsed the hundreds of extremely terrible arrows that Shalya shot and slew his four horses. Bhurishrava, Shalya, Drona's son, Samyamani's son and Shala were struck with terror at the strength of arms displayed by Krishna's son and could not withstand him.

“O Indra among kings! The Trigartas, the Madras, the Kekayas, with a number of twenty-five thousand, were urged by your son. They were foremost among those who were skilled in the use of weapons and were incapable of being vanquished by enemies in battle. They surrounded Kiriti and his son, desiring to kill them. O king! The Panchala general, conqueror of enemies, saw from a distance that the father and son, bulls among charioteers, had been surrounded. With many thousands of elephants and chariots and surrounded by hundreds of thousands of horse-riders and infantry, the scorcher of enemies angrily stretched his bow and advanced against the army of Madras and Kekayas. Protected by the illustrious and firm wielder of the bow and with masses of chariots, elephants and horses, that army was resplendent as it advanced towards the fight. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! While he was advancing towards Arjuna, Panchala struck Sharadvat¹⁶² in the shoulder with three arrows. He killed ten Madrakas with ten arrows. With a broad-headed arrow, he cheerfully killed Kritavarma's horses. With an iron arrow that was broad at the tip, the scorcher of enemies killed Damana, the heir of the great-souled Pourava. At this, Samyamani's son pierced Panchala, who was invincible in battle, with thirty arrows and his charioteer with another ten.

Having been thus wounded, that great archer licked the corners of his mouth with his tongue and used a broad-headed and extremely sharp arrow to slice down the bow.¹⁶³ O king! He swiftly wounded him with another twenty-five and killed his horses and the two charioteers who protected his flanks.¹⁶⁴ O bull among the Bharata lineage! With his horses slain, Samyamani's son remained stationed on the chariot and looked at the great-souled son of Panchala.¹⁶⁵ Grasping an extremely terrible sword that was made out of iron, he advanced on foot towards the chariot of Drupada's son. He was like a large wave, or like a serpent descending from the sky. He whirled his sword and with the blazing sword, looked like the resplendent sun at the time of destruction. He was like a crazy elephant in his valour. The Pandavas and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna saw him. On seeing him advance towards him, with a sharp sword in his hand and holding a shield, Panchala's son was overcome with rage. He was beyond the range of arrows, but was swiftly advancing towards the chariot. The enraged general shattered his head with a club. O king! When he fell down dead, the extremely polished sword and shield were loosened from his hands and fell down on the ground. Thus did the great-souled son of the king of Panchala exhibit his terrible valour and having killed him with his supreme club, obtained supreme fame.

“O venerable one! When the prince, the maharatha and great archer, was killed, loud cries of lamentation arose among your soldiers. Having seen that his son had been slain, Samyamani angrily and forcefully advanced against Panchala, invincible in battle. A great battle commenced between those two brave ones, both of whom were invincible in battle and all the kings among the Kurus and the Pandavas looked on. Samyamani, the destroyer of enemy heroes, struck Parshata with three arrows, like a mighty elephant with goads. Shalya, the adornment of any assembly, also angrily struck the brave Parshata on his chest and another encounter commenced.”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! I think that destiny is superior to human endeavour, since the soldiers of my sons are being killed by the soldiers of Pandu. O son! ¹⁶⁶ You always tell me that those on my side are being slaughtered and you always tell me that the Pandavas are not being killed and are happy. O Sanjaya! You tell me that those on my side are devoid of manliness and have fallen down, or are falling down, or are being killed. They are fighting to the best of their capacity and are endeavouring for victory. But while those on my side are decaying, the Pandavas are obtaining victory. O son! I am always hearing about the great, terrible and intolerable misery that has been caused by Duryodhana’s misdeeds. O Sanjaya! I do not see any means whereby the Pandavas may decay and those on my side are able to obtain victory in this battle.”

‘Sanjaya replied, ‘O king! Be patient and listen to the slaughter of the bodies of men and the destruction of elephants, horses and chariots and all of this great evil originates with you. Shalya oppressed Dhrishtadyumna with nine arrows. He was enraged and oppressed the lord of Madra with iron arrows. We then witnessed Parshata’s extraordinary valour, as he swiftly countered Shalya, the adornment of assemblies. As they engaged in battle, no gap could be seen and the battle between the two seemed to last only for an instant. O great king! In that encounter, Shalya sliced down Dhrishtadyumna’s bow with a broad-headed, yellow and sharp arrow. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He enveloped him with a shower of arrows and it was like clouds showering down rain on mountains at the time of the monsoon. When Dhrishtadyumna was thus tormented, Abhimanyu became angry. With great force, he dashed towards the chariot of the king of Madra. Having reached the chariot of the lord of Madra, Karshni, whose soul was immeasurable, pierced Artayani with three arrows. O king! Those on your side wished to counter Arjuna’s son in battle. They surrounded the chariot of the king of Madra and stationed themselves there. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O fortunate one! Duryodhana, Vikarna, Duhshasana, Vivimshati, Durmarshana, Duhsaha, Chitrasena, Durmukha, Satyavrata and Purumitra stationed themselves in battle, so as to protect the chariot of the lord of Madra. O lord of the earth!

At this, the angry Bhimasena, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, Droupadi's sons, Abhimanyu and the Pandavas who were Madri's sons¹⁶⁷ discharged many different kinds of weapons. In great delight, they sought to kill each other. O king! It is because of your evil policy that they engaged in battle. When that terrible encounter commenced between the ten rathas on either side, all the other rathas, on your side and on those of the enemy, became spectators. The maharathas discharged many different kinds of weapons. They roared at each other and struck each other. They were inflamed with anger and desired to kill each other. They were intolerant of each other and discharged great weapons. Overcome with anger in that great battle, Duryodhana pierced Dhrishtadyumna with four sharp, swift and terrible arrows. Durmarshana pierced him with twenty, Chitrasena with five, Durmukha with nine arrows, Duhsaha with seven, Vivimshati with five and Duhshasana with three. O Indra among kings! In return, Parshata, the tormentor of enemies, displayed the dexterity of his hands and pierced each of them with twenty-five. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that encounter, Abhimanyu pierced Satyavrata and Purumitra with ten arrows each. In that battle, the sons of Madri, the delight of their mother, enveloped their maternal uncle¹⁶⁸ with a wonderful torrent of arrows. O great king! The sons of his sister were supreme charioteers and were repulsing him. But Shalya enveloped them with many arrows. Despite being covered, the sons of Madri did not waver.

“The immensely strong Bhimasena saw Duryodhana. Pandava grasped a club, thinking that he would bring an end to the strife. On seeing the mighty-armed Bhimasena with his upraised club, like the peak of Kailasa, your sons were terrified and fled. However, Duryodhana was angered. With ten thousand swift elephants, he engaged the army of Magadhas against him.¹⁶⁹ With that army of elephants, and placing the Magadhas in front of him, King Suyodhana advanced against Bhimasena. Vrikodara saw that army of elephants descending on him. Roaring like a lion, he leapt down from the chariot, with a club in his hand. He grasped the heavy and great club, with a heart like that of a mountain. He attacked that army of

elephants, like death with a gaping mouth. Killing the elephants with the club, the powerful one wandered around in battle. The mighty-armed Bhimasena was like Vasava with the vajra. He let out a loud roar and this made the mind and the heart tremble. At Bhima's mighty roar, the elephants gathered together and lost all power of motion. The sons of Droupadi, Subhadra's maharatha son, Nakula, Sahadeva and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna were guarding Bhima's rear. They attacked the elephants with a shower of arrows, like clouds pouring down on mountains. With razor-sharp and broad-headed arrows and yellow *anjalikas*, the Pandavas severed the heads of those who were fighting on elephants.¹⁷⁰ The heads fell down and so did adorned arms and hands with goads held in them. It seemed like a shower of stones. Seated on the backs of elephants, those who were fighting on elephants lost their heads. They looked like broken trees on the summits of mountains. We saw other large elephants slain and brought down by Dhrishtadyumna, the great-souled Parshata. In that battle, the king of Magadha advanced on an elephant that looked like Airavata,¹⁷¹ towards the chariot of Subhadra's son. On seeing Magadha's mighty elephant advance towards him, Subhadra's son, the destroyer of enemy heroes, killed it with an arrow. After depriving him of his elephant, Karshni, the destroyer of enemy cities, used a broad-headed and silver-shafted arrow to slice off the king's head.

“Pandava Bhimasena penetrated that army of elephants. He roamed around the field of battle, crushing elephants, like Indra against mountains. In that battle, we saw Bhimasena kill elephants with a single stroke, like mountains shattered by the vajra. Elephants had broken tusks, broken temples, broken bones, broken backs and broken heads. They were slain like mountains. They trumpeted and lay down on the ground. Other elephants refused to fight in the battle. Some issued urine. In pain, others issued excrement. We saw dead elephants strewn along whichever path Bhimasena took, like mountains. Others vomited blood. Other giant elephants had their frontal globes smashed. Some lost their senses and fell down on the ground, like mountains on the face of the earth. Bhima

wandered around on the field of battle, like death with a staff in his hand. His body was smeared with fat, blood, lard and marrow. Vrikodara whirled his club, drenched with the blood of elephants. He seemed to be as terrible as Pinaki, the wielder of Pinaka.¹⁷² Crushed by the angry Bhimasena, the remaining army of your elephants suddenly fled. The charioteers and great archers, with Subhadra's son at the forefront, protected the brave one as he fought, like the wielder of the vajra is by the immortals. He held the club that was drenched in blood and was himself drenched in the blood of elephants. Bhimasena, terrible in his soul, then seemed to be like death himself. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! We saw him whirl his club in every direction. In that battle, we saw him dancing around like Shankara. O great king! We saw his terrible, heavy and devastating club, like Yama's staff and with a sound like that of Indra's vajra. It was covered in hair and marrow and was smeared with blood. It was like Rudra's Pinaka, when he angrily kills animals. Just as a herdsman uses a stick to drive a herd of animals, your army of elephants was driven back by Bhima's club. They were killed by that club and by arrows from all directions. Your elephants were scattered and ran away, crushing their own soldiers. Like a great storm that scatters the clouds, the elephants were driven away in that tumult by Bhima. He stood, like the wielder of the trident¹⁷³ in a cremation ground.”

CHAPTER 919(59)

‘Sanjaya said, “When that army of elephants was destroyed, your son, Duryodhana, instructed all the soldiers to kill Bhimasena. On your son's instructions, all the soldiers uttered terrible roars and rushed against Bhimasena. That large army was incapable of being assailed, even by the gods. It was as difficult to cross as the turbulent ocean, on the night of the new or full moon. It was full of chariots, horses and elephants. There was the sound of conch shells. There were a large number of kings in it and it was incapable of being agitated. As it advanced, Bhimasena stationed himself in the battle, against a large ocean. He was like the shore,

withstanding that ocean of soldiers. O king! In that battle, we faithfully witnessed Bhimasena's wonderful, extraordinary and superhuman deed. Without any hesitation, Bhimasena countered all those kings, horses, chariots and elephants with his club. That supreme of charioteers used his club to check that large army. Bhima stood immobile in that melee, like Mount Meru. At that extremely tumultuous and supremely dreadful time, his brothers, his sons, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, Droupadi's sons, Abhimanyu and maharatha Shikhandi did not abandon Bhimasena, because of the fear that was engendered from that great force.

“He¹⁷⁴ grasped a heavy and great club that was made of steel¹⁷⁵ and rushed against your soldiers, like Death with a staff in his hand. The lord smashed large numbers of chariots and large numbers of horses. Bhima wandered around in that battle, like the fire of destruction at the end of a yuga. He killed everyone in that encounter, like the lord of death at the end of a yuga. Pandava crushed large numbers of chariots with the force of his thighs. He was like a crazy elephant and all of them were like reeds before an elephant. He brought down charioteers from chariots and elephant-riders from elephants. He brought down horse-riders from the backs of horses and crushed infantry on the ground. With the dead bodies of men, elephants and horses, the field of battle looked like the abode of the dead. He was like Rudra with the Pinaka, destroying animals in his anger. With the terrible and destructive club, which made a sound like Indra's vajra, Bhimasena looked like Yama, with a staff in his hand. The great-souled Kounteya whirled his club and assumed an extremely terrible form, like death at the time of the destruction of a yuga. He repeatedly shattered that large army. He was seen to be like death himself and all of them became dispirited. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Wherever Pandava cast his eye, with his club upraised, all the soldiers there seemed to vanish. He shattered the soldiers and was unvanquished by the army. He devoured the soldiers, like the destroyer with a gaping mouth. He grasped the great club and performed terrible deeds there.

“On seeing Vrikodara thus, Bhishma swiftly advanced towards him. He was on a giant chariot with the radiance of the sun and it roared like the

clouds. He enveloped everything with a shower of arrows, like clouds showering down rain. On seeing Bhishma advance, like the destroyer with a gaping mouth, the mighty-armed and intolerant Bhima rushed towards him. At that instant, Satyaki, the brave descendant of the Shini lineage, devoted to the truth, attacked the grandfather. He began to kill the enemy with his firm bow and made the soldiers of your son tremble. He was borne on silver steeds and unleashed arrows from his firm bow. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Among all those on your side, there was no second one capable of withstanding him.¹⁷⁶ Alambusa, seated on a supreme king of elephants, pierced him with sharp and terrible arrows. But Shini's brave grandson pierced him with four arrows and advanced on his chariot. On seeing the foremost of the Vrishni lineage thus advancing, circling in the midst of the enemy, repeatedly repulsing the bulls among the Kuru lineage and roaring, no one, not even the best, was capable of withstanding him. He tormented like the midday sun. O king! With the exception of Somadatta's son, there was no one there who was not cheerless. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing that all the charioteers on his side had been routed, Bhurishrava, Somadatta's son, grasped a terrible and powerful bow and advanced, desiring to fight with Satyaki.”

CHAPTER 920(60)

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! Extremely enraged, like a gigantic elephant, Bhurishrava pierced Satyaki with nine arrows. While all the worlds looked on, Satyaki, immeasurable in his soul, used straight-tufted arrows to repulse Kourava.¹⁷⁷ At this, King Duryodhana, surrounded by his brothers, surrounded Somadatta's son, who was striving in that battle. In the same fashion, the immensely energetic Pandavas swiftly surrounded Satyaki in that encounter and stationed themselves for battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bhimasena was extremely angry. He raised his club and confronted all your sons, with Duryodhana at the forefront. Surrounded by several thousand chariots and inflamed with

anger, your son, Nandaka, pierced the immensely strong Bhimasena with sharp arrows, tufted with the feathers of herons and sharpened on stone. In that battle, Duryodhana was also angry and struck the immensely strong Bhimasena in the chest with three sharp arrows. At this, the mighty-armed and immensely strong Bhima climbed onto his own chariot, supreme among chariots, and told Vishoka,¹⁷⁸ ‘These brave maharathas, the sons of Dhritarashtra, are extremely strong. They are extremely angry and are trying to kill me in battle. While you look on, there is no doubt that I will kill them today in this encounter. O charioteer! Therefore, in this encounter, drive the horses carefully.’ Having said this, Partha pierced your son, Duryodhana, with nine sharp arrows that were decorated with gold. He pierced Nandaka in the chest with three arrows. Duryodhana pierced the immensely strong Bhima with six. With another three extremely sharp arrows, he pierced Vishoka. O king! In that encounter, as if he was smiling, the king¹⁷⁹ sliced off Bhima’s radiant bow from his hand with three sharp arrows. On seeing that Vishoka was oppressed in that encounter by the sharp arrows discharged by your archer son, Bhima was unable to tolerate it. O great king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In great rage, he grasped a divine bow, with the desire of killing your son. In his anger, he grasped a kshurapra arrow, tufted with hair. With this, Bhima sliced off the king’s supreme bow. Discarding the bow that was sliced down, he¹⁸⁰ was inflamed with wrath and swiftly grasped another bow that was stronger. He took up an extremely terrible arrow that was as radiant as destiny and death. In great rage, he struck Bhimasena in the chest with this. Having been thus deeply wounded in the chest, he was in pain and sunk down on the floor of the chariot, having lost his senses. On seeing that Bhima was thus wounded, all the Pandava maharathas and great archers, with Abhimanyu at the forefront, could not tolerate this. Those extremely energetic ones unleashed a tumultuous shower of terrible and sharp weapons on your son’s head. Meanwhile, the immensely strong Bhimasena regained consciousness. He again pierced Duryodhana with five arrows. Pandava, the great archer, then pierced Shalya with twenty-

five arrows that had golden tufts and thus pierced, he fled from the field of battle.

“Fourteen of your sons then attacked Bhima—Senapati, Sushena, Jalasandha, Sulochana, Ugra, Bhimaratha, Bhima,¹⁸¹ Bhimabahu, Alolupa, Durmukha, Dushpradharsha, Vivitsu, Vikata and Soma. Their eyes were red with rage and they shot many arrows towards Bhimasena, piercing him simultaneously. The immensely strong Bhimsena saw your sons and the brave one licked the corners of his mouth, like a wolf amidst smaller animals. With a kshurapra arrow, Pandava sliced off Senapati’s head. He pierced Jalasandha and despatched him to Yama’s abode. He killed Sushena and sent him to the land of the dead. With a bhalla arrow, he brought down Ugra’s head, with the helmet and earrings and as handsome as the moon, to the ground. O venerable one! In that encounter, Bhima then used seven arrows to despatch Bhimabahu to the land of the dead, together with his horses, his standard and his charioteer. O king! Smilingly, Bhimasena swiftly despatched the brothers, Bhima and Bhimaratha, to Yama’s abode. In the sight of all the soldiers, in that great encounter, Bhima used a kshurapra arrow to convey Sulochana to Yama’s abode. On witnessing Bhimasena’s terrible valour, your remaining sons were struck with fear on account of Bhima.¹⁸²

“Shantanu’s son then spoke to all the maharathas. ‘This Bhima, wielding a fierce bow, is angry in battle and is slaughtering the maharatha sons of Dhritarashtra, though they are wise, superior, brave and united and the kings are being scattered.’ Having been thus addressed, all the soldiers on the side of the sons of Dhritarashtra angrily rushed at the immensely strong Bhimasena. O lord of the earth! Bhagadatta mounted an elephant with rent temples and swiftly descended on the spot where Bhima was stationed. Descending in that battle, he used arrows sharpened on stone, so that in the encounter, Bhimasena became invisible, like clouds covering the sun. Depending on the strength of their own arms, the maharathas, with Abhimanyu at the forefront, could not tolerate that Bhima should be thus enveloped. They released a shower of arrows from all directions. The

elephant was pierced by arrows from all directions. The elephant of the king of Pragjyotisha was pierced by a shower of extremely energetic and excellent weapons of many types. It was oppressed and covered with blood. In that battle, it looked like a giant cloud that was tinged with the rays of the sun. The elephant was exuding musth. Goaded by Bhagadatta, it rushed against them, like Death urged by the Destroyer. It doubled its speed and made the earth tremble. On beholding its gigantic and extremely terrible form, all the maharathas thought that it was intolerable and became dispirited. O tiger among men! The maharatha king, who was a great archer, used an arrow with drooping tufts to strike him on the chest. Thus struck, his limbs stiffened and losing his senses, he grasped the pole of the standard.¹⁸³ On seeing that the others were terrified and that Bhimasena had lost his senses, the powerful and strong Bhagadatta began to roar.

“O king! On seeing Bhima in this state, the rakshasa Ghatotkacha became angry. Assuming a terrible form, he created fearful maya, capable of creating terror among cowards. He disappeared in an instant and then again assumed a terrible form. He rode on Airavata, created through the use of his own maya. Other elephants that were the guardians of the directions followed it—Anjana, Vamana and Mahapadma.¹⁸⁴ Rakshasas were seated on these extremely radiant and giant elephants. O king! These three were gigantic in form and exuded a lot of musth. They were energetic, courageous and powerful and extremely strong and valiant. Ghatotkacha goaded his own elephant. The scorcher of enemies wished to kill Bhagadatta and his elephant. The other rakshasas, immensely strong, goaded the other elephants, each of which possessed four tusks. They descended on Bhagadatta’s elephant and simultaneously pierced it with their tusks. Oppressed and pained by those elephants and wounded by the arrows, it uttered a giant roar, like the sound of thunder. On hearing the roar and the extremely terrible and fearful sound, Bhishma spoke to Drona and King Suyodhana. ‘In fighting in this battle with Hidimba’s evil-souled son, the great archer Bhagadatta confronts a mighty danger. This rakshasa

resorts to great illusion and the king is also extremely wrathful. These extremely valorous ones will confront each other, like Death and the Destroyer facing each other. We can hear the great roars of the delighted Pandavas. We can hear the great lamentations of the frightened elephant.¹⁸⁵ O fortunate ones! Let us go and protect the king. If he is not swiftly protected in this encounter, he will lose his life. O extremely valiant ones! Therefore, let us proceed without delay. This great and terrible encounter has commenced and it is making the body hair stand up. This brave leader of an army¹⁸⁶ is devoted to us and has been born in a noble lineage. O ones without decay! It is appropriate that we should save him together.’ On hearing these words of Bhishma, with Bharadvaja’s son at the forefront, and accompanied by all the kings, they advanced to protect Bhagadatta.

““With great speed, they advanced to the spot where he was stationed. On seeing that they were advancing, with Yudhishtira at the forefront, the Panchalas, together with the Pandavas, followed the enemy from behind. On seeing that large army, the powerful Indra among the rakshasas let out an extremely loud roar, which was like the sound of thunder. On hearing this roar and on seeing the fighting elephants, Shantanu’s son, Bhishma, spoke to Bharadvaja’s son. ‘I do not wish to fight with Hidimba’s evil-souled son. He is full of strength and valour now and has support. The wielder of the vajra himself is incapable of vanquishing him in battle now. He is certain in his aims and can strike. Our mounts are exhausted and at the end of the day, are wounded and lacerated on account of the Panchalas and the Pandaveyas. Therefore, I do not think that we should fight any more with the victorious Pandavas. Let it be announced that we will withdraw for the day. Tomorrow, we will fight with the enemy again.’ On hearing the grandfather’s words, the Kouravas, who were oppressed by the fear of Ghatotkacha, were happy and resorted to the advent of night. The Kouravas retreated. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The Pandavas were victorious and roared like lions, sounding conch shells and flutes. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Thus did the battle rage on that day,

between the Kurus and the Pandavas, with Ghatotkacha at the front. O king! The Kouravas returned to their own camps. When night arrived, they were ashamed at having been defeated by the Pandaveyas. The bodies of the maharatha sons of Pandu were wounded by arrows. But they were delighted at the outcome of the battle and returned to their camps. O great king! They placed Bhimasena and Ghatotkacha in the front and in great delight, honoured them. They roared in many different kinds of ways and this mixed with the sounds of the trumpets. They roared like lions and this mingled with the sounds of conch shells. The great-souled ones roared and made the earth tremble. O venerable one! This agitated the hearts of your sons. When night fell, those scorchers of enemies retired to their camps. King Duryodhana was miserable at his brothers having been killed. He reflected on this for some time, overcome by sorrow and tears. He then made arrangements in all the camps, according to what is decreed. He was tormented by sorrow and pained, on account of his brothers.”

CHAPTER 921(61)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! I am struck by great fear and wonder on hearing of the deeds of the sons of Pandu. Even the gods will find it extremely difficult to accomplish these. O Sanjaya! O suta! On hearing about the defeat of my sons in every way, I am overcome with grave thoughts about what will happen. Vidura’s certain words are oppressing my heart. O Sanjaya! Because of destiny, it is seen that everything is occurring as he said it would. Bhishma is the foremost among brave ones and is supreme among those who possess the knowledge of weapons. That warrior is fighting with the army of the Pandavas. What do the great-souled and immensely strong sons of Pandu possess? O son!¹⁸⁷ What supreme boons have they obtained? What knowledge have they accumulated? They do not suffer any decay, like masses of stars in the firmament. I cannot endure the repeated slaughter of my soldiers at the hands of the Pandavas. Because of destiny, this extremely terrible punishment is descending on me. The sons of Pandu cannot be killed and

my sons are being slaughtered. O Sanjaya! I cannot detect any reason as to why this should be the case. Nor do I see any means of overcoming this misery. I am like a man who is trying to cross the mighty ocean with his arms. There is no doubt that all my sons will meet a terrible death. I do not see a brave one who can protect those on my side in battle. O Sanjaya! In this battle, the destruction of my sons is certain. O suta! Tell me the specific reason for this. I am now asking you about the true reason and you should tell me everything. What did Duryodhana do, on seeing that his troops were running away in battle? What about Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Soubala, Jayadratha, the mighty archer who is Drona's son and the immensely strong Vikarna? What did those great-souled ones determine to do then? O immensely wise one! O Sanjaya! Did my sons retreat?"

'Sanjaya replied, "O king! Listen attentively to what you wish to hear. Nothing was accomplished because of mantras and nothing was caused by maya. O king! Nor did the Pandavas create a fresh calamity. They are fighting in a just cause and they are fighting according to their powers. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They have performed all their deeds and tasks in accordance with dharma. The Parthas have always acted so as to obtain great fame. Resorting to dharma, those immensely strong ones have never retreated from a fight. They have obtained supreme prosperity. Where there is dharma, victory exists there. O king! That is the reason the Parthas cannot be killed in battle and that is the reason they are victorious. Your evil-souled son has always acted according to evil. He is cruel and has performed inferior deeds. That is the reason he is decaying in this battle. O lord of men! Your son has performed many violent deeds. He has deceived the sons of Pandu, acting like inferior men. They disregarded all the offences committed by your son. O Pandu's elder brother! The Pandavas have always ignored them. O lord of the earth! Your son has not shown them appropriate honour. This is the outcome of those evil deeds. These are the extremely terrible fruits of that, like that of *kimpaka*.¹⁸⁸ O great king! With your sons and well-wishers, you are tasting that. O king! Though you were restrained by your well-wishers, Vidura, Bhishma and the great-souled Drona, you did not realize this. I also tried to restrain you,

but you did not accept those words. Those were beneficial words. They were like medicine. But you rejected them, like a dying man who does not accept medicines. You accepted the views of your sons and hoped to defeat the Pandavas. Listen to my words about the true reasons. You have asked me about them. O foremost among the Bharata lineage! I will tell you about the reasons behind the victory of the Pandavas. O scorcher of enemies! I will tell you exactly as I have heard it. Duryodhana himself asked the grandfather about this, when he saw that all his maharatha brothers were vanquished in the battle. When night fell, Kourava was overwhelmed with sorrow in his heart. In humility, he went to the immensely wise grandfather. O lord of men! Hear from me what your son said at that time.

“Duryodhana said, ‘You, Drona, Shalya, Kripa, Drona’s son, Hardikya Kritavarma,¹⁸⁹ Sudakshina from Kamboja, Bhurishrava, Vikarna and the valiant Bhagadatta—all of these are renowned as maharathas and all of them have been born in noble lineages. It is my view that they are sufficient for all the three worlds. All the assembled Pandavas cannot stand before them in valour. A doubt has therefore arisen in my mind and I am asking you about this. How are the Kounteyas obtaining victory at every step? Who is their support?’

“Bhishma replied, ‘O king! O Kourava! Listen to the words that I am going to speak to you. I often spoke to you. But you did not act in accordance with my words. O supreme among the Bharata lineage! I asked you to act so that there might be peace with the Pandavas. O lord! I thought that this would have been beneficial for both you and the world. O king! You would have happily enjoyed the earth with your brothers. You would have chastised all ill-wishers and delighted your relatives. O son!¹⁹⁰ But on earlier occasions, you did not heed my words. Because you dishonoured the Pandus, you are now confronted with this calamity. They are the performers of unsullied deeds. O lord! O great king! I will tell you the reasons why they cannot be killed. Listen. There is no one in this world who can vanquish the Pandavas in battle. There has been no such person,

nor will there be. They are protected by the wielder of the Sharnga bow.¹⁹¹ O son! O one learned in dharma! Listen exactly to what was chanted and recounted in the ancient accounts, by sages whose souls were controlled. In ancient times, all the gods and rishis assembled and worshipped the grandfather¹⁹² on Mount Gandhamadana. Seated in their midst, Prajapati¹⁹³ saw an excellent and blazing vimana stationed in the sky. Having got to know everything about it through his powers of meditation, Brahma joined his hands in salutation. With his soul filled with delight, he bowed before the supreme being, the supreme lord. On seeing that Brahma had stood up, all the rishis and gods also stood, hands joined in salutation, beholding that great marvel.

““Brahma, supreme among those who have knowledge of the brahman, worshipped him and said, “You are the end of the universe. You are the creator of the universe. You are supreme. You are supreme dharma. You are the glory of the universe. You are the manifestation of the universe. You are the refuge of the universe. You are the action of the universe. You are the controller. You are the lord of the universe. You are Vasudeva. You are the soul of yoga. You are divinity and I seek refuge in you. Victory to the great god of the universe. Victory to the one who is engaged in the welfare of the worlds. Victory to the illustrious lord of all yoga. Victory to the one who is before and after yoga. The lotus was created from your navel. You possess large eyes. Victory to the one who is the lord of all the lords in the universe. You are the past, the present and the future. Victory to the one who creates tranquillity in the soul. You are the store of innumerable qualities. Victory to the one on whom everything depends. You are Narayana. You are impossible to comprehend. Victory to the one who is the wielder of the Sharnga bow. You are the one who possesses all the secret qualities. The universe is your form. You are free from disease. You are the lord of the universe. You are mighty-armed. Victory to the one who is engaged in the welfare of the worlds. O mighty serpent! O great boar! O one with the tawny mane! Victory to the lord. O one with the yellow garment! O one who is the lord of the directions. O one in whom

the universe resides! O one without decay! You are the manifest. You are the unmanifest. You are in control of your senses. You possess vigorous senses. Your soul is beyond measure. You are the only one who knows about your own self. Victory to the deep one who satisfies all desires. You are infinite. You are known as the wise one. You are eternal. You are the one who causes all the worlds to be manifest. You accomplish all your tasks. You act according to wisdom. You know about dharma. You are the one who is the harbinger of victory. Your soul is mysterious. You are the soul of all beings. You are the origin of everything that comes into existence. You know about the nature of all beings. You are the lord of the worlds. Victory to the one who makes all beings appear. You are the self-creating one. You are the immensely fortunate one. You are the one who acts so as to bring about the destruction of everything. You are the one who inspires all thoughts in the mind. Victory to the brahman, beloved of all beings. You act for the sake of creation and destruction. O lord of desire! O supreme lord! You are the origin of amrita. You are the origin of virtue. You are the fire at the end of a yuga. You are the one who grants victory. You are the lord of all Prajapatis. O god! The lotus was created from your navel. O immensely powerful one! You are the one who was created from his own self. You are the great being. You are the one with action in his soul. Victory to the one who is active. The goddess earth constitutes your feet. The directions are your arms. The firmament is your head. I am your form. The gods are your limbs. The sun and the moon are your eyes. O lord! Austerities performed because of truth, dharma and desire are your strength. The fire is your energy. The wind is your breath. Water is created from your sweat. The Ashvins are always your ears. The goddess Sarasvati is your tongue. The devoted sacraments of the Vedas are vested in you. The universe finds refuge in you. You are the lord of yoga. It is impossible to know your measure, your dimensions, your energy, your valour, your strength or your yoga. The gods are devotedly faithful to you. They are immersed in your rules. O Vishnu! O supreme lord! O great lord! They always worship you. Through your favours, I have created rishis, gods, gandharvas, yakshas, rakshasas, serpents, pishachas, men, animals,

birds and reptiles on earth. O one who created the lotus in your navel! O large-eyed one! O Krishna! O dispeller of all misery! You are the destination of all beings. You are the leader. You are the mouth of the universe. O lord of the gods! It is through your favours that the gods are always happy. O god! It is through your favours that the earth is always without fear. O large-eyed one! You have taken birth to extend the lineage of the Yadus, so that dharma may be established and the daityas destroyed. O lord! For upholding the universe, do what I have asked you to. O lord! O Vasudeva! Through your favours, I have exactly sung all that is extremely mysterious in your essence. Create the god Samkarshana¹⁹⁴ out of your own self. O Krishna! Create Pradyumna out of your own self.¹⁹⁵ Aniruddha is known as the undecaying Vishnu and create him out of Pradyumna. It is Aniruddha who created me, Brahma, the upholder of the universe.¹⁹⁶ I have been created by Vasudeva's essence and I have therefore been created by you. O lord! Divide yourself into different parts and take birth in the world of men. There, for the welfare of all the worlds, act so that all the asuras can be killed. Establish dharma. Obtain fame. Obtain the essence of yoga. O infinitely valorous one! The brahmarshis of the world and the gods are devoted to you and chant your names and about your supreme soul. They are all established in you. All beings find refuge in you. You are the one who provides them sanctuary. O well-armed one! You are the granter of boons. You have no beginning. You have no middle. You have no end. You possess the supreme yoga. You are a bridge for the worlds. That is what the brahmanas sing.””””

CHAPTER 922(62)

““Bhishma said, ‘Then the illustrious god, the lord of all the lords of the world, replied to Brahma in a soft and deep voice. “O son!¹⁹⁷ Through yoga, I have come to know everything that you desire. It will be as you wish.” Saying this, he instantly disappeared. At this, the gods, the rishis and the gandharvas were filled with great wonder. All of them were filled with great curiosity and spoke to the grandfather. “O lord! Who was the

one before whom your illustrious self bowed down? You worshipped him using supreme praises. We desire to hear this.” Thus addressed, the illustrious grandfather replied to all the gods, the brahmarshis and the gandharvas in soft and sweet words. “He is the supreme *Tat*.¹⁹⁸ He is the one who exists now and he is the one who will exist in the future. He is the supreme one. He is the lord who is the soul of all beings. He is the brahman who is the supreme goal. O bulls among gods! I had a conversation with that cheerful one. For the welfare of the universe, I sought the favours of the lord of the universe. I requested him to be born in the world of men and to be known as Vasudeva. I asked him to be born on earth for the death of the asuras. The immensely strong and terrible daityas, danavas and rakshasas, who have been killed in the battle, have been born among men. It is for their death that the illustrious and mighty one has been born in a human womb and is roaming around on earth, accompanied by Nara. The supreme rishis Nara and Narayana are ancient. They are invincible in battle, even by the united immortals. Ignorant ones will not know the rishis Nara and Narayana. Vasudeva is the great god of all the worlds and should be worshipped by you. I, Brahma, the lord of the universe, am his offspring. O supreme among the gods! You should never disregard him as a mere man. He is extremely valorous and holds the conch shell, the chakra and the club. He is the supreme mystery. He is the supreme goal. He is the supreme brahman. He is the supreme glory. He is without decay. He is the one who is not manifest. He is the eternal one. He is the supreme being whose praise is chanted as Purusha. But no one knows him. He is supreme energy. He is supreme happiness. He is the supreme truth praised by Vishvakarma. The illustrious Vasudeva, whose valour is infinite, should not be disregarded as a mere man by all the gods and Indra, or by all the worlds. The evil-minded one, who disregards and speaks of Hrishikesha as a mere man, is the worst of men. The great-souled yogi has adopted a human form. He who disregards Vasudeva, is spoken of as one who is immersed in darkness. That god is the soul of the mobile and the immobile. He is the immensely radiant one who bears the

srivatsa mark.¹⁹⁹ The lotus sprouted from his navel. He who does not know this is spoken of as one who is immersed in darkness. He is diademed and wears the Koustubha jewel.²⁰⁰ He is the one who dispels the fear of his friends. He who disregards the great-souled one, will be immersed in terrible darkness. O supreme among the gods! Having known the truth about Vasudeva, the lord of the lords of the worlds, all the worlds should show him obeisance.” Having spoken these words to the masses of gods in earlier times, the illustrious soul of all the worlds returned to his own abode.

“““The gods, the gandharvas, the sages and the apsaras listened to Brahma’s chants, and happily returned to heaven. O son!²⁰¹ In earlier times, the learned rishis spoke about Vasudeva in their assembly and I heard this. O one who knows about the sacred texts! I also heard this from Rama, Jamadagni’s son, the wise Markandeya, Vyasa and Narada. Having heard the nature of the great-souled and illustrious Vasudeva, the lord of the lords of the worlds and the undecaying one, from whom was created Brahma, the father of the universe, why should men not worship and show obeisance to Vasudeva? O son! You have been restrained earlier by the sages, learned in the Vedas, and been asked not to enter into a fight with the intelligent Vasudeva and also with the Pandavas. But because of your delusion, you did not understand. I think of you as a cruel rakshasa who is immersed in darkness. That is the reason you hate Govinda and Pandava Dhananjaya. O king! I am telling you that he is eternal and undecaying. He is the eternal one who pervades all the worlds. He is the controller. He is the creator. He is the eternal upholder. He holds up all the three worlds. He is the lord and the preceptor of the mobile and the immobile. He is the warrior. He is victory. He is the victorious. He is the lord of all nature. O king! He is full of truth. He is devoid of darkness and passion. Where there is Krishna, dharma exists there. Where there is dharma, victory exists there. His greatness is yoga and yoga is his own self. O king! It is because the sons of Pandu hold this up that victory will be theirs. He always provides beneficial counsel to the Pandavas. He always gives them

strength in battle and protects them from fear. He is the eternal god. He is the auspicious one who is full of mystery. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You have asked me about the one who is famous by the name of Vasudeva. Brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras, each with their respective marks, always perform their own duties and serve the one who should be worshipped. At the end of dvapara yuga and at the beginning of kali yuga, he is the one whom Satvata Samkarshana eulogized in the appropriate way.²⁰² All the worlds of gods and men, with the cities and right up to the frontiers of the ocean, where men have lived for years and years, have been repeatedly created by Vasudeva.’”

CHAPTER 923(63)

“Duryodhana said, ‘In all the worlds, Vasudeva is spoken of as the great being. O grandfather! I wish to know about his origin and his glory.’

“Bhishma replied, ‘Vasudeva is the great being. He was created with the gods. O bull among the Bharata lineage! No one superior to Pundarikaksha can be seen. Markandeya spoke about Govinda’s extraordinary greatness. He is the great-souled Purushottama. He is in all beings and is the soul of all beings. He created the three elements of water, air and energy. He is the god who created the earth. He is the lord of all the lords of the worlds. The great-souled Purushottama was lying down on water. The god who is everywhere was asleep in his yoga. He created fire from his mouth. He created wind from his breath of life. Through his mind, the undecaying one created Sarasvati and the Vedas. He initially created the worlds, with the gods and the masses of rishis. He decreed the decay and death of all beings and also their birth and growth. He is dharma. He is learned in dharma. He is the granter of boons. He is the one who satisfies all desire. He is the actor. He is action. He is the ancient god and is himself the lord. He created the past, the present and the future, and everything. Janardana created the two sandhyas,²⁰³ the directions, the sky and the rituals. Govinda created the austere rishis. The great-souled and undecaying lord created the universe. He created Samkarshana, the first

among all beings. He created the god Shesha, whom the learned know of as Ananta. He holds up all beings and the earth, with all its mountains.²⁰⁴ Through their yoga of meditation, brahmanas speak of him as the immensely energetic one. The great asura named Madhu was born from the secretion of his ears. He was extremely terrible in his deeds and terrible in his intelligence. He was about to kill Brahma, but Purushottama slew him. O son! Having killed him, the god Janardana came to be worshipped by gods, danavas, men and rishis as Madhusudana.²⁰⁵ He is the boar. He is the lion. He is the lord with the three steps.²⁰⁶ He is the mother. He is the father. He is Hari for all beings. There is no one superior to Pundarikaksha, nor will there ever be. O king! He created the brahmanas from his mouth, the kshatriyas from his arms, the vaishyas from his thighs and the shudras from his feet. He is the refuge of all beings. He is the essence of the brahman. He is the essence of yoga. One can attain the great god Keshava by devoutly performing austerities on the nights of the new moon and the full moon. Keshava is supreme energy. He is the grandfather of all the worlds. O lord of men! The sages know him as Hrishikesha.²⁰⁷ Know him to be the teacher, the father and the preceptor. When Krishna favours someone, he wins the undecaying worlds. If a man confronts fear and always seeks refuge with Keshava, or reads about this, such a man obtains sanctuary and happiness. Men who attain Krishna are never deluded. Janardana always saves those who are immersed in great fear. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Yudhishtira knows about the truth of this. O king! With all his soul, he has sought refuge with the great-souled Keshava, the lord of the universe. He is the lord of yoga and he is the lord of the earth.’”

CHAPTER 924(64)

“Bhishma said, ‘O great king! Hear this hymn from me. It was chanted by Brahma himself and, in ancient times, recounted to those on earth by the brahmarshis and the gods. “You are the god of the sadhyas. You are the illustrious god who is the lord of all the gods. You know about the creator

of the worlds. Thus did Narada speak about you. Markandeya has described you as the past, the present and the future. You are the sacrifice among all sacrifices. You are austerity among all austerities. You are the god of all the gods. Thus did the illustrious Bhrigu describe you. You are the terrible and ancient form of Vishnu, the lord of all beings. You are Vasudeva among the Vasus. You are the one who established Shakra. You are the god of the gods and the god of all beings. Thus did Dvaipayana speak of you. In earlier times, at the time of the creation of all beings, you have been spoken of as Daksha Prajapati. You are the creator of all the worlds. Thus did Angiras speak of you. That which is not manifest is your body. That which is manifest is established in your mind. The gods have been created from your words. Thus did Devala speak of you. Your head extends up to heaven. Your two arms hold up the earth. The three worlds are in your stomach. You are the eternal Purusha. Men who are purified through austerities know of you in this way. To rishis who are satisfied with knowledge of the soul, you are truth. O Madhusudana! You are sole refuge of generous royal sages who do not retreat from the field of battle and who resort to the supreme forms of dharma.” O son! This is the nature of Keshava and I have recounted it you, both briefly and in detail. With affection in your mind, turn towards Keshava.”

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! Having heard this sacred account, your son formed a high opinion of Keshava and the maharatha Pandavas. O great king! Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, again spoke to him. ‘O son! You have heard about the glory of the great-souled Keshava and about the essence of Nara. You had asked me about them. You have heard about the reasons why Nara and Narayana have been born among men and why those two brave ones cannot be vanquished or slain in battle. O king! Nor can the Pandavas be worsted in battle. Krishna is firm in his devotion to the illustrious Pandavas. O Indra among kings! That is the reason I am telling you that you should strive for peace with the Pandavas. Enjoy the earth, with your powerful brothers around you. If you disregard the gods Nara and Narayana, you will be destroyed.’ O lord of the earth! Having spoken in this way, your father became silent. Having taken his leave of the king,

he left to sleep for the night. The great-souled king bowed to him and left for his own camp. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He spent the night on a white bed.””

CHAPTER 925(65)

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! When the night had passed and the sun had arisen, both the armies assembled to fight again. In great rage, wishing to kill each other, they advanced against each other. All of them glanced at each other and assembled for the encounter. O king! Because of your evil counsel, the Pandavas and the sons of Dhritarashtra arrayed themselves in vyuhas and counter-vyuhas. They armed and arrayed themselves and attacked each other. O king! Bhishma protected himself in every direction in the form of a makara vyuha.²⁰⁸ O king! The Pandavas also protected themselves in the form of a vyuha. Your father, Devavrata, advanced with a great army of chariots. He was surrounded by supreme charioteers and other chariots, infantry, elephants and horse-riders, all stationed in accordance with their appropriate ranks. The illustrious Pandavas saw that they were ready for battle. They arranged themselves for battle in the form of a *shyena*,²⁰⁹ the invincible vyuha that is the king of all vyuhas. The immensely strong Bhimasena was radiant at the mouth. The invincible Shikhandi and Parshata Dhritadyumna were the eyes. The brave Satyaki, with truth as his valour, was the head. Wielding the Gandiva bow, Partha was stationed at the neck. With an entire akshouhini, the illustrious and great-souled Drupada, together with his sons, stationed himself for battle on the left wing. Kekaya, the leader of an akshouhini, was stationed on the right wing. Droupadi’s sons and Subhadra’s valiant son formed the back. The illustrious King Yudhishtira, handsome in his prowess, was himself at the rear, with his two intelligent brothers.²¹⁰

““The battle commenced with Bhima penetrating the makara’s mouth. He advanced against Bhishma in that encounter and enveloped him with arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Using great weapons, Bhishma brought these down. In that great battle, he confounded the

soldiers of the sons of Pandu, who were stationed in arrays. On seeing that the soldiers were confounded, Dhananjaya swiftly advanced. In the forefront of that battle, he pierced Bhishma with one thousand arrows. Having repulsed the weapons that had been released by Bhishma in that encounter, he delighted his own soldiers, who were stationed in battle. At this, King Duryodhana spoke to Bharadvaja's son. The supreme among strong ones had earlier witnessed the terrible slaughter of his soldiers and the death of his brothers in the battle. Remembering this, the maharatha said, 'O preceptor! O unblemished one! You have always had my welfare in heart. We have sought refuge with you and with Bhishma, the grandfather. With this, there is no doubt that we can hope to vanquish even the gods in battle, not to speak of the sons of Pandu, who are inferior in valour and power in this encounter.' O venerable one! Having been thus addressed by your son, while Satyaki looked on, Drona penetrated the Pandava ranks. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Satyaki countered Drona's progress and a tumultuous battle commenced. It made the body hair stand up. Bharadvaja's powerful son was enraged. In that encounter, as if smiling, he pierced Shini's descendant on his shoulders with ten sharp arrows. O king! At this, extremely enraged, Bhimasena wished to protect Satyaki from Drona, supreme among the wielders of weapons, and pierced him. O venerable one! In that battle, Drona, Bhishma and Shalya angrily enveloped Bhimasena with arrows. O venerable one! Abhimanyu became angry, and so did Droupadi's sons. They used sharp arrows to wound all the warriors with upraised weapons. In the great battle, the great archer, Shikhandi, angrily advanced against the immensely strong Bhishma and Drona, who were causing this torment. The brave and powerful one grasped a bow that had the sound of a cloud. Shikhandi swiftly showered arrows that shrouded the sun. However, on confronting him, the grandfather of the Bharata lineage remembered that he had been a woman earlier and withdrew from the battle. O great king! At this, instructed by your son and with a desire to protect Bhishma, Drona rushed to battle. Shikhandi confronted Drona, supreme among the wielders of weapons, and fled from the field of battle, as if from the fire that burns at the destruction

of an era. O lord of the earth! With a large army, your son advanced to protect Bhishma and desiring a great victory. O king! But with Dhananjaya at the forefront, the Pandavas advanced against Bhishma, firm in their resolution of ensuring victory. A terrible and extremely wonderful battle ensued, like that between the gods and the danavas. Each side desired victory and eternal fame.”

CHAPTER 926(66)

‘Sanjaya said, “Shantanu’s son, Bhishma, then fought a tumultuous battle, wishing to save your sons from their fear of Bhimasena. In the forenoon, there was an extremely terrible battle between the kins on the Kuru and Pandava sides, with the destruction of the foremost among warriors. While that extremely fearful battle was raging on, there was a great and tumultuous sound that seemed to touch the sky. Giant elephants roared. Horses neighed. There was the sound of drums and conch shells and there was a mighty roar. Those valiant and extremely strong ones fought with each other, desiring victory. They roared at each other, like great bulls among herds of cows. O bull among the Bharata lineage! In that battle, heads were sliced down with sharp arrows and descended like a shower of stones from the sky. They still wore earrings and helmets, blazing in gold. O bull among the Bharata lineage! These heads were seen to fall down. The bodies were wounded by arrows. The severed arms still held on to bows. Adorned with ornaments, they were seen to be strewn all over the ground. The bodies bore armour. The upper arms were decorated with bracelets. The faces were like moons. The eyes were red. O lord of the earth! There were all the bodies of elephants, horses and men. In an instant, the earth was covered with a thick dust. In that thick cloud of dust, the weapons were like lightning. The sound made by the weapons was like the clap of thunder. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The ensuing tumultuous and fierce encounter between the Kurus and the Pandavas made a river of blood flow there. It was an extremely fearful, terrible and tumultuous fight and it made the body hair stand up. Unassailable in that battle, the kshatriyas showered down arrows. O supreme among the

Bharata lineage! Afflicted by the shower of arrows in that encounter, your elephants, and those belonging to the enemy, screamed in agony. With their riders slain, the horses ran around in the ten directions. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Your warriors, and those of the enemy, were oppressed and wounded by arrows. They leapt up and fell down. O lord of the earth! Horses, elephants and chariots were seen to whirl around in the battle there. Driven by destiny, the kshatriyas killed each other there with clubs, lances and arrows with drooping tufts. Other brave ones, skilled in battle, struck each other with bare arms that were like clubs made completely out of iron. O lord of the earth! The brave ones, on your side and that of the Pandavas, killed each other with clenched fists, thighs and palms. Charioteers were bereft of their chariots. Desiring to kill each other, they rushed at each other, with excellent swords in their hands. Surrounded by a large number of Kalingas and with Bhishma at the forefront, King Duryodhana charged against the Pandavas. At this, all the Pandavas surrounded Vrikodara. Inflamed with rage, they rushed against Bhishma on swift mounts.”

CHAPTER 927(67)

‘Sanjaya said, “On seeing Bhishma engaged in a fight with his brothers and the other kings, Dhananjaya raised his weapons and rushed against Gangeya. At Panchajanya’s²¹¹ roar, Gandiva’s twang and on seeing Partha’s standard, all those on our side were overcome with terror. It was like a tree that did not waver, like a comet that had arisen.²¹² It was colourful and possessed many hues. It was divine and bore the mark of the ape. O great king! We saw the wielder of the Gandiva’s standard to be of this type. It was like lightning in the midst of clouds, resplendent in the sky. The maharatha warriors saw Gandiva, with a back encrusted with gold. We heard his loud roars, like the roars of Shakra himself, and the terrible sound with which he slapped his palms as he went about killing your soldiers. As he showered arrows in every direction and enveloped all the directions, it was like a torrential cloud that was charged with

lightning. With terrible weapons, Dhananjaya advanced against Gangeya. We were confounded by these weapons and could not distinguish between the eastern and the western direction. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Your warriors could not distinguish between the directions. They were overcome with exhaustion. They were bereft of their weapons. They were bereft of their senses. They clung to each other for comfort. With all your sons, they sought succour with Bhishma. In that battle, Bhishma, Shantanu's son, became the refuge of the oppressed ones. Overcome with terror, charioteers jumped down from their chariots and horse-riders from the backs of their horses. Even the infantry fell down on the ground. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having heard the roar of Gandiva, which was like the rumbling of thunder, all your soldiers were frightened and seemed to decay.

“There were a large number of the best of Kamboja horses, fleet of foot. This was surrounded by a large army from the land of Govasana,²¹³ with many thousand *gopas*.²¹⁴ O lord of the earth! This was surrounded by Madras, Souviras, Gandharas, Trigartas, all the best among the Kalingas, the king of Kalinga,²¹⁵ nagas and a large number of men, with Duhshasana at the forefront. It was accompanied by King Jayadratha and all the kings. Instructed by your son, there were fourteen thousand supreme horse-riders and they surrounded Soubala. O bull among the Bharata lineage! In that battle, all these on your side assembled against Pandava, on separate chariots and mounts. The chariots, elephants, horses and infantry raised an extremely thick cloud of dust and it made the battle seem even more fearful. Bhishma was supported by a large army with spears, lances, iron arrows, elephants, horses, chariots and warriors and attacked Kiriti. The king of Avanti engaged the king of Kashi and Bhimasena engaged Saindhava. Ajatashatru fought with Shalya, bull among the Madras, together with his sons and advisers. Vikarna fought with Sahadeva and Chitrasena with Shikhandi. O lord of the earth! The king of Matsya engaged Duryodhana and Shakuni. Drupada, Chekitana and maharatha Satyaki fought with the great-souled Drona, together with his

son. Kripa and Kritavarma advanced against Dhrishtaketu. In this fashion, there was a melee with horses, elephants and chariots. In every direction, the soldiers fought with each other. Though there were no clouds, there was terrible lightning. Dust enveloped the directions. O lord of the earth! With terrible sounds, large meteors were seen to fall down. A mighty storm began to blow and a shower of dust fell down. The soldiers were shrouded in dust and the sun disappeared in the sky. Covered by that dust, though they continued to fight with upraised weapons, all the soldiers were confused and dispirited. As they were released from the arms of brave ones, the net of arrows, capable of piercing every kind of armour, raised a loud noise. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Weapons were released from excellent arms and blazed in the sky, like radiant stars. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Shields were seen to be scattered around in all the directions. They were colourful and made from the hides of bulls. They were decorated with golden nets. Heads and bodies were seen to fall in every direction, sliced off by swords with the complexion of the sun. Maharathas fell down on the ground there. The wheels, axles and shafts of their chariots were shattered. Their giant standards were brought down. Their horses were slain. With the charioteers slain, some horses were maimed with weapons and fell down, dragging the chariots with them. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Those best of horses still had their harnesses on. But they were wounded by arrows and their bodies were mangled. They could be seen there, dragging the yokes after them. O king! Extremely powerful elephants were seen to kill rathas who fought on chariots, with their charioteers and horses, single-handedly. While large numbers of soldiers were being killed, many elephants were seen to sniff in the air, inhaling the scent of the musth exuded by other elephants. In the midst of that large army, elephants were killed with lances and iron arrows and fell down, deprived of their lives. In the midst of the army, the field was strewn with the dead bodies of the best of elephants. The elephants crushed warriors as they fell down, with their elephant-riders and their standards. O great king! In that battle, the shafts of chariots were seen to be shattered by the trunks of elephants that resembled the king of

elephants.²¹⁶ Tuskers shattered large numbers of chariots. In that battle, they crushed and dragged down charioteers by the hair, as if they were the branches of trees. As chariots fought with chariots, the best of elephants dragged them down, running in all the directions with a loud noise. As they were thus dragged away by the elephants, they looked like masses of lotus stalks, dragged away from ponds by other elephants. Thus, the field of battle was strewn with a large number of horse-riders, infantry and maharathas, and their standards.”

CHAPTER 928(68)

‘Sanjaya said, “O lord of the earth! With Virata of Matsya, Shikhandi swiftly attacked Bhishma, the mighty archer who was extremely difficult to vanquish. O bull on the earth! In that battle, Dhananjaya advanced against Drona, Kripa, Vikarna and many other brave kings who were great archers and extremely powerful, and also against the great archer Saindhava, together with his advisers and relatives and the kings from the west and the south. In that encounter, Bhimasena attacked your intolerant son Duryodhana, the great archer, together with Duhsaha. Sahadeva advanced against Shakuni and maharatha Uluka, the father and son who were great archers and were extremely difficult to vanquish in battle.²¹⁷ O great king! Maharatha Yudhishtira had been deceived by your sons. In that battle, he attacked the army of elephants.²¹⁸ Pandava Nakula was a brave warrior who could make enemies cry in battle. He attacked the excellent chariots of the Trigartas. Satyaki, Chekitana and Subhadra’s maharatha son were invincible in battle and advanced against Shalva and the Kekayas. Dhrishtaketu and rakshasa Ghatotkacha were extremely difficult to defeat. In that encounter, they attacked the army of chariots that belonged to your sons. General Dhrishtadyumna was immensely strong and immeasurable in his soul. O king! In that battle, he attacked Drona, whose deeds were extremely wonderful. Thus the great archers on your side fought with the Pandavas. Having encountered each other in battle, the brave ones proceeded to strike each other down. When it was

midday and the sun had reached the midpoint of the sky, burning down with its fierce rays, the Kurus and the Pandavas began to kill each other. Chariots roamed around on the field of battle. They had standards decorated with gold and pennants. They were covered with tiger skins and were beautiful. As they encountered each other in that battle, wishing to kill each other and roaring like lions, a tumultuous sound arose. In that battle, the brave Srinjayas and Kurus performed extremely terrible deeds and struck each other and it was an extraordinary sight. O king! O tormentor of enemies! We could not see the sky, the directions, or the sun, or the sub-directions. Arrows were released in every direction. There were lances with polished tips, iron spears and yellow swords. These possessed radiance like that of blue lotuses. There were colourful armour and the brilliance of ornaments. The radiance from these made the sky, the directions and the sub-directions blaze. O king! The field of battle was resplendent. There were lions among rathas and tigers among men and they confronted each other in battle. O king! They blazed in that battle, like planets in the sky.

“While all the soldiers looked on, Bhishma, foremost among charioteers, angrily repulsed the immensely strong Bhimasena. In that encounter, the arrows used by Bhishma were gold-tufted and sharpened on stone. They were extremely forceful and washed in oil and they wounded Bhima. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The immensely powerful Bhimasena was enraged. He hurled an extremely powerful javelin that was like a venomous serpent. As that gold-shafted and invincible lance suddenly descended in that encounter, Bhishma sliced it down with straight-tufted arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! After this, using a broad-headed, yellow and sharp arrow, he sliced Bhimasena’s bow into two. At this, Satyaki quickly attacked Bhishma in that battle. O lord of men! He shot many arrows at your father. Bhishma then affixed an extremely terrible and sharp arrow and brought down Varshneya’s²¹⁹ charioteer from his chariot. O king! When the charioteer of the chariot was slain, the horses fled. They ran hither and thither, with the speed of the mind and the wind. At this, a tumultuous uproar arose from all the

soldiers. There were lamentations of woe from those who were on the side of the great-souled Pandavas. ‘Run’, ‘grab the horses’, ‘advance swiftly’—such loud noises followed Yuyudhana’s chariot.²²⁰ While this was going on, Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, began to kill the Pandava soldiers, like the slayer of Vritra against the asuras. When the Panchalas and Somakas were being killed by Bhishma, the noble ones²²¹ resolved to fight and attacked Bhishma. With a desire to kill those in the army of your sons, the Parthas, with Dhrishtadyumna at the forefront, rushed against Shantanu’s son in that encounter. O king! Your soldiers, with Bhishma and Drona at the forefront, advanced forcefully against the enemy and another battle commenced.”

CHAPTER 929(69)

‘Sanjaya said, “With three arrows, Virata pierced maharatha Bhishma. With another three arrows, he pierced the maharatha’s steeds. At this, Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, the great archer, immensely strong and skilled in the use of his hands, used ten gold-tufted arrows to pierce him back in return. With a firm hand, Drona’s son, the maharatha who was terrible in wielding the bow, used six arrows to pierce the wielder of Gandiva between his breasts. At this, Phalguna, the slayer of enemy heroes, sliced down his bow. The destroyer of enemies used extremely sharp arrows to wound him. He²²² became senseless with rage and grasped an even more powerful bow. In that encounter, he could not tolerate his bow being sliced down by Partha. O king! He pierced Phalguna with nine sharp arrows and pierced Vasudeva with seventy supreme arrows. At this, the eyes of Krishna and Phalguna became coppery red in wrath. They sighed long and deep and began to think repeatedly. The wielder of Gandiva, the destroyer of enemies, grasped his bow with his left hand. He angrily affixed sharp and straight-tufted arrows. They were terrible and were capable of robbing one of one’s life. In that encounter, he swiftly pierced Drona’s son, supreme among strong ones, with these. In that battle, they pierced through his armour and drank up his blood. But though pierced by the

wielder of Gandiva, Drona's son was not distressed. Without being perturbed, he showered back arrows in return. O king! In that battle, he wished to protect the one who was great in his vows.²²³ The bulls among men applauded this great deed of his, of being able to counter the two Krishnas²²⁴ together. He remained fearlessly stationed in that battle, fighting all the soldiers. From Drona, he had learnt about releasing and withdrawing extremely difficult weapons. 'This is the son of my preceptor. This is Drona's beloved son. In particular, he is a brahmana and is worthy of my veneration.' Thinking this, the brave Bibhatsu, the tormentor of his enemies and foremost among charioteers, showed mercy towards Bharadvaja's son. In that battle, Kounteya, the tormentor of his enemies, gave up the fight with Drona's son. The brave one swiftly began to kill your soldiers.

“Duryodhana pierced the mighty archer Bhimasena with ten gold-tufted arrows that had been sharpened on stone and were shafted with the feathers of vultures. Extremely enraged, Bhimasena grasped a colourful and firm bow, which was capable of slaying the enemy, and ten sharp arrows. He drew the bow back to his ear and aimed those sharp, forceful and extremely energetic arrows. With these, he powerfully pierced the king of the Kurus on his broad chest. A gem hung from his chest on golden threads. When he was pierced, this was as resplendent as the sun surrounded by planets. When oppressed by Bhimasena, your energetic son could not tolerate it, like a snake unable to bear the slap of a palm. O great king! He became extremely wrathful and desiring to protect his own soldiers, used gold-tufted arrows that were sharpened on stone to pierce Bhima. In that battle, they fought and wounded each other. Those two immensely strong sons of yours were like the gods.

“Subhadra's son, the destroyer of enemy heroes, pierced Chitrasena, tiger among men, with ten arrows and Purumitra with seven. He was the equal of Shakra in battle and pierced Satyavrata with seventy. The brave one seemed to dance around on the field, causing great grief to us. Chitrasena pierced him back with ten arrows, Saytavrata with nine and

Purumitra with seven. He was pierced and wounded and was covered with blood. However, Arjuna's son sliced down Chitrasena's great and colourful bow, which was capable of repulsing the enemy. He used an arrow to pierce his armour and oppress him. At this, all the brave and maharatha princes on your side united together and angrily began to pierce him with sharp arrows. But he was supreme in the knowledge of weapons and wounded all of them with sharp arrows. On witnessing this deed accomplished by him, your sons surrounded him. He was capable of consuming soldiers in a battle, like a fire consumes deadwood in the forest after the winter season is over. As he chastised your soldiers, Subhadra's son was radiant. O lord of the earth! On beholding the deeds of Satvati's son²²⁵ in that battle, your grandson, Lakshmana, the bearer of auspicious marks, swiftly attacked him. Abhimanyu angrily pierced Lakshmana with six arrows and his charioteer with three. O king! But Lakshmana pierced Subhadra's son with sharp arrows. O great king! This seemed to be extraordinary. Subhadra's extremely powerful son used sharp arrows to slay Lakshmana's four arrows and his charioteer, and then attacked him. When the horses were killed, Lakshmana, the destroyer of enemy heroes, remained stationed on his chariot. He angrily hurled a javelin towards the chariot of Subhadra's son. It was terrible in form and unassailable and suddenly descended, like a snake. But Abhimanyu used sharp arrows to slice it down. At this, Goutama's son²²⁶ took Lakshmana up on his own chariot and carried him away on the chariot, while all the soldiers looked on.

“That extremely fearful battle raged on. Warriors violently struck each other, wishing to kill each other. The great archers on your side and the maharatha Pandavas fought each other in that battle, prepared to lay down their lives and killing each other. Their hair was dishevelled. They lost their armour. They were bereft of their chariots. Their bows were sliced down. The Srinjayas and the Kurus fought on, with their bare arms. The mighty-armed and immensely strong Bhishma, angrily began to kill the soldiers of the great-souled Pandavas with divine weapons. Horses,

elephants, men, charioteers and horse-riders were slain and brought down there and the earth was covered with them.”

CHAPTER 930(70)

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! The mighty-armed Satyaki, invincible in battle, drew a supreme bow, capable of withstanding a great burden, in that battle. He discharged many tufted arrows that were like virulent serpents. He displayed the deep, light and wonderful dexterity of his hands. He drew the bow, affixed arrows to it, discharged them and affixed others so swiftly that he seemed to be like a beautiful cloud that was showering down rain. He killed the enemies in that battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! King Duryodhana saw that he was blazing and despatched ten thousand chariots against him. But valiant Satyaki, for whom truth was valour, was a great and supreme archer. He used divine weapons to slay all of them. Having accomplished this terrible deed, he grasped his bow and confronted Bhurishrava, the extender of the deeds of the Kuru lineage, in that battle. On seeing that the soldiers had been brought down by Yuyudhana, he²²⁷ angrily attacked him. He stretched an extremely large bow that had the complexion of Indra’s weapon.²²⁸ O great king! He displayed the dexterity of his hands and released thousands of arrows that were as virulent as serpents and were like the vajra. O king! These arrows were like the touch of death to Satyaki’s followers and they fled, leaving the invincible Satyaki alone in that fight.

““On seeing this, Yuyudhana’s ten sons advanced against Bhurishrava, the great archer, in that battle. They were maharathas and immensely strong. They were clad in excellent armour and bore many different kinds of weapons and standards. All of them were extremely angry in that great battle and spoke to the one who had the mark of a sacrificial stake on his standard.²²⁹ ‘O immensely strong one! O relative of the Kouravas!²³⁰ Come and fight with us, either singly, or together. You will obtain great fame if you vanquish us in battle. Or we will vanquish you in battle and obtain great satisfaction.’ Thus addressed, the immensely strong and brave

one, who was foremost among men and prided himself on his valour, saw them stationed there and replied, ‘O brave ones! You have spoken well. If that is your desire, fight with me now. I will endeavour to kill all of you in battle.’ Having been thus addressed, the brave ones who were swift in action showered the great archer, the destroyer of enemies, with arrows. O great king! That tumultuous encounter commenced when it was afternoon. In that field of battle, there was a single one on one side and many united ones on the other. They enveloped that single-handed and foremost warrior with arrows. O king! It was like clouds showering down on a giant mountain. When unleashed, that shower of arrows was like Yama’s staff, or like the vajra. But before they could reach him, the maharatha swiftly sliced them down. We then beheld the extraordinary valour of Somadatta’s son. He single-handedly fought with many, without any fear. O king! The ten maharathas created a shower of arrows. They surrounded the mighty-armed one, wishing to kill him. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O king! In that battle, Somadatta’s son used ten arrows to angrily slice down their bows. O king! When their bows had been sliced down, in that encounter, the maharatha instantly used sharp, straight-tufted and broad-headed arrows to slice off their heads. Thus slain, they fell down on the ground, like trees struck by lightning.

“O king! On seeing that his brave and immensely strong sons had been killed in battle, Varshneya²³¹ roared and attacked Bhurishrava. In that battle, chariot dashed against chariot and the two immensely strong ones oppressed each other. In that encounter, they slew the horses of each other’s chariot. Deprived of their chariots, the maharathas jumped down on the ground. They grasped great swords and supreme shields and attacked each other. As they were stationed for battle, those tigers among men were dazzling. Satyaki was wielding a supreme sword. O king! But Bhimasena swiftly approached him and took him up on his chariot. O king! And while all the archers looked on in that battle, your son picked up Bhurishrava on his chariot. O bull among the Bharata lineage! While that battle raged on, the angry Pandava began to fight with maharatha Bhishma. When the sun had assumed a reddish tinge, Dhananjaya swiftly

killed twenty-five thousand maharathas. They had been instructed by Duryodhana to slay Partha. But they approached him and met their destruction, like insects before a flame. At this, the Matsyas and the Kekayas, skilled in the knowledge of fighting, surrounded maharatha Partha and his son. At that moment, the sun disappeared and all the soldiers were overcome with confusion. O great king! It was evening and with his mounts exhausted, your father, Devavrata, instructed that the soldiers should withdraw. Having encountered each other, the Pandava and Kuru troops were filled with great fear and anxiously retired to their camps. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having retired to their own camps, the Pandavas and the Srinjayas, and the Kurus, rested, as was appropriate.””

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! The Kurus and the Pandavas spent the time in different ways and when night had passed, they emerged again to fight. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! A great sound arose from those on your side and theirs. The foremost among rathas prepared to do battle and elephants were readied. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Infantry and horses were armoured. The tumultuous sound of conch shells and drums was everywhere. At this, King Yudhishtira spoke to Dhrishtadyumna. ‘O mighty-armed one! Construct the vyuha known as makara, which is capable of tormenting the enemy.’ O great king! Thus addressed by Partha, maharatha Dhrishtadyumna, foremost among rathas, accordingly instructed the rathas. Drupada and Pandava Dhananjaya were at the head. Maharatha Sahadeva and Nakula were the eyes. O great king! The immensely strong Bhimasena was the beak. Subhadra’s son, Droupadi’s sons, rakshasa Ghatotkacha, Satyaki and Dharmaraja were stationed at the neck of the vyuha. O great king! Virata, the leader of an army, was at the back, surrounded by Dhrishtadyumna and a large army. The five brothers from Kekaya were on the left flank. Dhrishtaketu, tiger among men, and the valiant Karakarsha were stationed on the right flank, so as to protect the vyuha. O great king! The illustrious maharatha Kuntibhoja and Shatanika were stationed at the feet, surrounded by a large army. The great and might archer Shikhandi, surrounded by the Somakas, and Iravat stationed themselves at the tail of the makara. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus did the Pandavas array themselves in the form of a great vyuha. O great king! When the sun arose, they armoured themselves and stationed themselves for battle. They had elephants, horses, chariots and infantry. They raised their colourful standards and umbrellas. They armed themselves with sharp and polished weapons and swiftly advanced against the Kouravas.

“O king! Your father, Devavrata, saw this vyuha and arranged his soldiers in the form of a giant counter-vyuha that had the shape of a

curlew.²³² Bharadvaja's son, the great archer, was at its beak. O lord of men! Ashvatthama and Kripa were the eyes. Kritavarma, foremost among men and foremost among all archers, was at the head, together with the kings of Kamboja and Bahlika. O venerable one! O great king! Shurasena and your son, Duryodhana, were at the neck, surrounded by many kings. O foremost among men! The king of Pragjyotisha was at the chest, together with the Madras, Souviras and Kekayas, and surrounded by a large army. Together with his own army, Susharma, the king of Prasthala,²³³ armoured and stationed himself along the left wing. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The Tusharas, Yavanas, Shakas and Chuchupas stationed themselves along the right wing of that vyuha. O venerable one! Shrutayu, Shatayu and Somadatta's son were stationed at the rear of the vyuha, protecting each other.

“The battle between the Pandavas and the Kouravas commenced. O great king! When the sun had arisen, there was a great encounter. Charioteers confronted charioteers and elephants confronted elephants. Those riding on horses advanced against those riding on horses. But those on chariots also attacked horse-riders. O king! In that great battle, chariot-riders not only attacked chariot-riders, but also elephants. Elephant-riders fought against chariot-riders and chariot-riders fought against horse-riders. Chariot-riders fought against infantry and horse-riders fought against infantry. O king! They were full of wrath and attacked each other in that encounter. Protected by Bhima, Arjuna, the twins and the other maharathas, the army of the Pandavas was as beautiful as the night sky with stars. Your army was also resplendent with Bhishma, Kripa, Drona, Shalya, Duryodhana and the others, like the firmament circled by planets.

“On seeing Drona, the valiant Kounteya Bhimasena, borne by swift horses, advanced against the men who were in the army of Bharadvaja's son. Drona was enraged in the battle. O king! In that encounter, the valiant one pierced Bhima in his inner organs with nine iron arrows. However, though Bhima was forcefully struck in that conflict, he despatched the charioteer of Bharadvaja's son to Yama's abode. Bharadvaja's powerful

son began to control the mounts himself. He consumed the Pandava soldiers, like a fire amidst a mass of cotton. O supreme among men! Thus slaughtered by Drona and Bhishma, the Srinjayas and the Kekayas were defeated and began to run away. Your soldiers were also mangled by Bhima and Arjuna. They lost their senses there, like a proud and beautiful woman.²³⁴ Both the vyuhas were penetrated and there was a destruction of the best of brave ones. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There was terrible distress in your army and in theirs. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! We witnessed the extraordinary sight of all your soldiers and those of the enemy fighting with a single objective in mind. O lord of the earth! The maharatha Pandavas and Kouravas fought with each other. They repulsed each other's weapons.'”

CHAPTER 932(72)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “Our army is supreme and possesses many qualities. It has many different components. O Sanjaya! It has been arranged in a vyuha according to the sacred texts and should be unassailable. We have sustained it and it has always been extremely devoted to us. The soldiers are disciplined and free from vice and they have exhibited their valour earlier. They are not too old. Nor are they too young. They are not lean. Nor are they fat. They are active and tall. Their bodies are well-developed and they are free from disease. They are armoured and trained in the use of weapons. They possess many kinds of weapons. They are skilled in fighting with swords, bare arms and in fighting with clubs. Lances, swords, clubs, iron maces, catapults, javelins and all kinds of maces, kampanas, bows, kanapas, different kinds of slings, fighting with the bare fists—they are skilled in all these. They are devoted to training. They have persevered in exercises. They have devotedly learned everything about the handling of weapons. They have trained in mounting and descending, riding, moving forward, stepping back, striking effectively, advancing and retreating and are skilled. In many ways, they have been tested with elephants, horses, chariots and vehicles. Having been appropriately tested,

they have been given the right kind of pay. This has not been influenced by lineage, favours, relationships, the strength of friendship, or connections of birth or marriage. They are prosperous people and noble. Their relatives have been treated well by us and are satisfied. We have shown them many favours. They are famous and honoured. O son!²³⁵ They are protected by many victorious ones who are the foremost among men, famous in the worlds because of their prominent deeds. They are like the guardians of the worlds. They are protected by many kshatriyas, who are honoured by all the people on earth. They have to come because of their own wishes, with their armies and their followers. This is like a large ocean, with rivers flowing into it from all directions. There are many elephants and chariots. Though these do not actually have wings, they seem to possess wings. Our many warriors constitute the terrible waters. The mounts are the waves. It is full of slings, swords, clubs, lances, bows and javelins. There are standards and ornaments that are embellished with jewelled cloth. The advancing mounts are like the agitating force of the wind. It is like a great and roaring ocean, without any limits. It is protected by Drona and Bhishma and also protected by Kritavarma, Kripa and Duhshasana and others who are led by Jayadratha. It is also protected by Bhagadatta and Vikarna, Drona's son, Soubala and Bahlika and many other great-souled ones who are the foremost warriors of the world. That this should be slaughtered in battle can only be because of earlier destiny. O Sanjaya! Such a preparation²³⁶ on earth has never been seen before, by men, or by the immensely fortunate and ancient rishis. This large army is prosperous with every kind of weapon. If it should be killed in battle, how can that be anything other than destiny? O Sanjaya! To me, everything seems to be contrary. Such a terrible army cannot fight with the Pandavas in battle. Perhaps the gods have assembled here in the cause of the Pandavas. O Sanjaya! Perhaps they are fighting against my soldiers and that is the reason they are being killed. O Sanjaya! Vidura had earlier spoken about what was beneficial medicine for me. But my evil-minded son, Duryodhana, did not accept it. It is my view that the great-souled and

omniscient one had known all this earlier. O son! He knew what was going to happen. It was preordained destiny. O Sanjaya! Perhaps all this is exactly as the creator had ordained it earlier. That is the reason it cannot be countered.”

CHAPTER 933(73)

‘Sanjaya replied, “O king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! It is because of your own sins that you have confronted this calamity. O king! Duryodhana failed to foresee what you saw as the outcome of adharma in action. O lord of the earth! It was because of your sins that the gambling match had taken place earlier. It is because of your sins that the battle with the Pandavas has commenced. Having committed the evil yourself, you must now enjoy the fruits. O king! One must bear the consequences of the deeds one commits, in this world or in the next, and you have obtained what is appropriate. O king! Therefore, though you confront this great calamity, be patient. O venerable one! Listen, while I describe the account of the battle.

““With sharp arrows, Bhimasena penetrated your great army. The brave one then confronted all of Duryodhana’s younger brothers— Duhshasana, Durvishaha, Duhsaha, Durmada, Jaya, Jayatsena, Vikarna, Chitrasena, Sudarshana, Charuchitra, Suvarmana, Dushkarna, Karna²³⁷ —and a large number of other maharathas. When he approached and saw these sons of Dhritarashtra, the immensely strong Bhima was excited with rage. In that battle, the great army was protected by Bhishma. But he penetrated into it. On seeing him there, those lords of men spoke to each other. ‘Vrikodara Bhima is here. Let us rob him of his life.’ Partha was thus surrounded by the brothers, who had made up their minds. He was like the sun, surrounded by large and evil planets at the time of the destruction of all beings. Though Pandava was in the midst of the vyuha, he was not frightened. It was like the great Indra, when he confronted the danavas in the battle between the gods and the asuras. O lord! Hundreds and thousands of rathas covered the single-handed one from all directions,

with terrible arrows and he reciprocated. In that battle, the brave one paid no attention to the sons of Dhritarashtra and killed the foremost of brave warriors, on elephants, horses and chariots. O king! The great-minded Bhimasena knew the intentions of his relatives and had made up his mind to kill all of them. Pandava descended from his chariot and grasped a club. With this, he began to kill the soldiers of the sons of Dhritarashtra, which was like a great ocean.

““When Bhimasena had penetrated, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna swiftly abandoned Drona²³⁸ and went to where Soubala was. That bull among men shattered your large army. In that battle, he came upon Bhimasena’s empty chariot. In that encounter, he saw Bhimasena’s charioteer, Vishoka. O great king! Dhrishtadyumna was distressed and lost his senses. Extremely miserable, he asked in a voice that was choked with tears, the words emerging through his sighs. ‘Where is Bhima? I love him more than my own life.’ Vishoka joined his hands in salutation and told Dhrishtadyumna, ‘The powerful and strong Pandaveya instructed me to wait here and plunged into the army of the sons of Dhritarashtra, as large as an ocean. That tiger among men cheerfully spoke these words to me. “O charioteer! Control the horses and wait here for an instant, while I swiftly slay those who have raised their weapons against me.” When they saw the immensely strong one advance with the club in his hand, all the others on our side also advanced to fight. A tumultuous and fearful battle commenced. O king! Your friend penetrated that great vyuha and entered. ‘Parshata Dhrishtadyumna heard Vishoka’s words. In that field of battle, the immensely strong one replied to the charioteer. ‘O suta! If I abandon my affection for the Pandavas and abandon Bhimasena in the battle, there is no reason for me to remain alive. What will the kshatriyas say, if I return without Bhima? After all, I was present when Bhima showed such single-mindedness in battle. With Agni at the forefront, the gods inflict harm on those who forsake their aides and return home unharmed. The immensely strong Bhima is my friend and my relative. That destroyer of enemies is devoted to me and I am devoted to him. I will therefore go where Vrikodara has gone. Behold me slay the enemies, like Vasava

against the danavas.’ Having said this, the brave one penetrated the midst of the Bharata soldiers,²³⁹ following the path traversed by Bhimasena, marked out by elephants ravaged with the club. He saw Bhima consuming the ranks of the enemy. He shattered those kings in battle, like a powerful wind devastating trees. In that battle, charioteers, horse-riders, infantry and elephant-riders were killed and roared loudly in lamentation. O venerable one! There were cries of woe among your soldiers, as Bhimasena, wonderful in different means of fighting, slew them. All those who were skilled in the use of weapons surrounded Vrikodara from all sides. Without any fear, they showered weapons at him from all directions. Parshata saw that Pandava Bhimasena, foremost among the wielders of weapons, was attacked on all sides by those brave ones of the world, accompanied by their terrible assembly of soldiers. His limbs were mangled from the arrows. He was treading on the ground with a club in his hand, vomiting the poison of his wrath. He was like death at the time of destruction. Parshata went and comforted Bhimasena. The great-souled one removed the arrows from his body and lifted him up onto his own chariot. He embraced and comforted Bhimsena, in the midst of the enemy.

“‘While that great battle was going on, your son approached his brothers and told them, ‘This son of Drupada is evil in his soul. He has arrived to help Bhimasena. All of you go and kill him. Let the enemy not seek out our soldiers.’ The sons of Dhritarashtra were incited by their elder brother. They heard his words and attacked in intolerance. They raised their weapons with a desire to kill, like terrible comets at the time of the destruction of a yuga. The brave ones grasped colourful bows. They made the earth tremble with the twang of their bows and the roar of their chariot wheels. They showered arrows on Drupada’s son, like clouds pouring down water on the tops of mountains. But that colourful warrior²⁴⁰ was not perturbed in the battle and sliced them all down with his own sharp arrows. Your brave sons were stationed around him in that battle, striving their utmost. But Drupada’s young and fierce son was determined to kill them. O king! Extremely angry, the maharatha released the weapon known

as *pramohana*²⁴¹ at your sons, like the great Indra in a battle against the daityas. In that battle, those brave ones among men lost their senses. Afflicted by the *pramohana* weapon, they lost their minds and their spirits. When they saw that your sons were unconscious and had lost their senses, as if their time had come, all the Kurus fled in all the directions, together with the horses, the elephants and the chariots.

“At that time, Drona, foremost among the wielders of weapons, confronted Drupada and pierced him with three terrible arrows. O king! Having been thus pierced by Drona in the field of battle, King Drupada remembered his earlier enmity.²⁴² O king! He fled. Having thus defeated Drupada, the powerful Drona blew on his conch shell. On hearing the sound of this conch shell, all the Somakas were frightened. The energetic Drona, supreme among the wielders of weapons, heard that your sons had become unconscious in battle because of the *pramohana* weapon. O king! In his anxiety, Drona swiftly went to that part of the battlefield. Bharadvaja’s powerful son, the great archer, saw Dhrishtadyumna and Bhima wandering around in that great field of battle. The maharatha saw that your sons were overcome by unconsciousness. He unleashed the weapon known as *prajna*, to counter the *mohana* weapon.²⁴³ Your maharatha sons again regained their breath of life. They returned to the battle against Bhima and Parshata.

“Yudhishtira summoned and addressed his own soldiers. ‘Let twelve brave rathas armour themselves. And with Subhadra’s son at the forefront, to the best of their ability, follow the footsteps of Bhima and Parshata in the battle. Let us find out what has happened to them. My mind is not at peace.’ Having been thus addressed, those brave and valiant warriors, all of whom prided themselves on their manliness, agreed and accepted what they had been asked to do. They departed together, when the sun had reached the midpoint in the sky. The Kekayas, Droupadi’s sons and the valiant Dhrishtaketu had Abhimanyu at the forefront and were surrounded by a large army.²⁴⁴ In that battle, those destroyers of enemies arranged themselves in the *vyuha* known as *suchimukha*.²⁴⁵ In that battle, they

broke through the ranks of chariots that belonged to the sons of Dhritarashtra. Those great archers advanced, with Abhimanyu at the forefront. O lord of men! Your soldiers were terrified of Bhimasena and had lost their senses because of Dhrishtadyumna. They were incapable of resisting and were like a woman in the streets, who faces a person who is drunk. Those great archers advanced with standards that were decorated with gold. They advanced swiftly to protect Dhrishtadyumna and Vrikodara. On seeing the great archers, with Abhimanyu at the forefront, those two were delighted and began to slaughter your soldiers.

““Brave Parshata of Panchala suddenly saw his preceptor advancing towards him.²⁴⁶ He gave up the desire to kill your sons. He made Kekaya take Vrikodara up on his chariot and advanced in great rage against Drona, skilled in the use of weapons. At this, Bharadvaja’s powerful son, the destroyer of enemies, became angry and used a broad-headed arrow to slice down his bow. For the sake of Duryodhana’s welfare and remembering the food he had obtained from his master,²⁴⁷ he released hundreds of arrows towards Parshata. But Parshata, the destroyer of enemy heroes, took up another bow and pierced Drona with seventy gold-tufted arrows that had been sharpened on stone. Drona, the destroyer of enemies, sliced down his bow yet again. The valiant one then swiftly used four supreme arrows to despatch his four horses to Vaivasvata’s²⁴⁸ eternal and terrible abode. He despatched another broad-headed arrow and killed his charioteer. With his horses killed, the mighty-armed maharatha descended from his chariot and climbed onto Abhimanyu’s great chariot. While Bhimasena looked on and while Parshata looked on, the infinitely energetic Drona shattered the forces and made their army of chariots, horses and elephants tremble. The assembled maharathas were powerless to counter this. Having been killed by Drona’s sharp arrows, those soldiers swayed, like a turbulent ocean. When they saw those soldiers in that state, your troops were delighted. They saw the enraged preceptor consume the ranks of the enemy. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the warriors roared in applause.””

‘Sanjaya said, “Having regained his senses, King Duryodhana once again repulsed the undecaying Bhima with showers of arrows. Yet again, your maharatha sons united together. With raised weapons, they fought with Bhima in that battle. In that battle, Bhimasena again climbed onto his own chariot. The mighty-armed one went to the spot where your sons were. He grasped an extremely forceful, firm and colourful bow that was capable of slaying the enemy. In the battle, he pierced your sons with arrows. At this, King Duryodhana pierced the immensely strong Bhimasena in his vital parts with an extremely sharp iron arrow. Thus pierced by your archer son, the great archer’s eyes became red with rage. He forcefully drew his bow and wounded Duryodhana in the arms and the chest with three arrows. But despite being wounded, the king remained there, like an immobile king of mountains. All of Duryodhana’s brave younger brothers were ready to give up their lives. In the battle, they saw the two angry ones striking one another and remembered their earlier resolution of afflicting the one whose deeds were terrible. O great king! As they descended on him, the immensely strong Bhimasena rushed against them, like an elephant against other elephants. O great king! In great rage, the energetic one struck your immensely famous son, Chitrasena, with an iron arrow. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He also struck your other sons in that conflict, with many different kinds of arrows, gold-tufted and extremely fast.

““Those twelve maharathas, Abhimanyu and the others, had been sent by Dharmaraja to follow in Bhimasena’s footsteps. O great king! They advanced against your immensely strong sons. Those brave ones were stationed on chariots that were like the sun and the fire in their energy. All of them were great archers and blazed in their prosperity. On seeing them resplendent in that great battle, with shining and golden armour, your immensely strong sons gave up the fight with Bhima. But Kounteya was unable to tolerate the sight of their leaving alive. In that battle, Abhimanyu, accompanied by Bhimasena, attacked. On seeing them, and on seeing Parshata, your maharatha soldiers, Duryodhana and the others,

grasped their bows. Borne by fast horses, they went to the spot where those rathas were stationed. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In the afternoon, there was a terrible battle between the powerful ones on your side and on the side of the enemy. Abhimanyu killed Vikarna's extremely swift horses. He then pierced him with twenty-five *kshudraka*²⁴⁹ arrows. O king! With his horses slain, maharatha Vikarna abandoned his chariot and climbed onto Chitrasena's radiant chariot. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Stationed on a single chariot, those two brothers, the extenders of the Kuru lineage, enveloped Arjuna's son with a net of arrows. Durjaya and Vikarna pierced Krishna's son²⁵⁰ with five iron arrows. However, Krishna's son did not waver and was immobile, like Mount Meru. O venerable one! In that encounter, Duhshasana fought with the five from Kekaya. O Indra among kings! It was an extraordinary fight. Enraged in battle, Droupadi's sons repulsed Duryodhana. O lord of the earth! Each of them pierced your son with three arrows. But your son was invincible in that battle with Droupadi's sons. O king! He wounded each of them separately with sharp arrows. Pierced in return, he was covered in blood and was radiant. He was like a mountain, with streams mixed with minerals flowing down it.

“O king! In that battle, the powerful Bhishma killed the Pandava soldiers, like a herdsman driving large numbers of animals. O lord of the earth! The roar of Gandiva was heard then, as Partha began to slaughter the soldiers along the right flank. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that battle, headless torsos stood up in every direction, amongst the soldiers of both the Kurus and the Pandavas. It was like an ocean of blood, with the chariots as the eddies. The elephants were the islands and the horses were the waves. The chariots were boats that tigers among men used to cross that ocean of soldiers. The best of men were without arms, without armour and without bodies. They were seen to fall down, in hundreds and thousands. Crazy elephants were slain, their bodies splattered with blood. O foremost among the Bharata lineage! The earth seemed to be strewn with mountains. O descendant of the Bharata lineage!

We witnessed an extraordinary sight, both among those on your side and theirs. There was no man there who did not wish to do battle. Thus did the brave ones fight, striving for great fame. Those on your side fought with the Pandavas, desiring victory in battle.””

CHAPTER 935(75)

‘Sanjaya said, “The sun assumed a reddish tinge. Desiring victory and wishing to kill him, King Duryodhana attacked Bhima. On seeing that brave one amongst men, firm in his enmity, advance towards him, Bhimasena was extremely enraged and spoke these words. ‘I have desired this moment for many years and the time has now arrived. If you do not flee from the battle, I will kill you today. I will dispel the misery of Kunti today and the difficulties we faced during our exile in the forest. I will kill you and dispel Droupadi’s woes. At the time of gambling with the dice, you insulted the Pandavas. O Gandhari’s son! Witness the calamity that has befallen you because of your evil act. In earlier times, you relied on the views of Karna and Soubala. You did not think of the Pandavas and did as you wished. When Dasharha came as a suppliant,²⁵¹ you disregarded him because of your delusion. In delight, you gave Uluka a message to deliver to us. I will kill you today, with your relatives and your kin. I will avenge all the evil deeds you have committed earlier.’ Having said this, he repeatedly stretched his terrible bow. He took up terrible arrows that were as radiant as the great vajra. In great anger, he swiftly shot twenty-six arrows at Suyodhana. They were flaming, with crests like fire, and they had tongues like the vajra. After that, he struck his bow with two and his charioteer with another two. With four arrows, he despatched his²⁵² swift horses to Yama’s abode. The scorcher of enemies then used two arrows that were released with great force. With these, he sliced down the king’s umbrella from his supreme chariot. With three more, he sliced down the flaming and supreme standard. Having sliced it down, while your son looked on, he emitted a loud roar. That handsome standard, decorated with many gems, fell down from the chariot. It suddenly fell down on the

ground, like lightning from the clouds. It was resplendent like the sun and was beautiful with jewels. It was marked with the sign of an elephant. All the kings saw that the standard of the lord of the Kurus had been brought down. In that battle, as if he was smiling, Bhima then used ten arrows to slay his mighty elephant.

“At this, Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu, foremost among rathas, stationed himself on Duryodhana’s flank, supported by many good warriors. O king! Kripa, foremost among rathas, picked up the infinitely energetic Kouravya, the intolerant Duryodhana, on his own chariot. He had been deeply pierced and wounded in that battle with Bhimasena. O king! Duryodhana sat down on the floor of the chariot. Desiring to kill Bhima, Jayadratha surrounded him from all sides. There were many thousand chariots on all of Bhima’s directions. O king! Then Dhrishtaketu, the valiant Abhimanyu, the Kekayas and Droupadi’s sons fought with your sons.

“O king! The delicate and famous Abhimanyu’s chariot was surrounded from all directions by eight great archers—Chitrasena, Suchitra, Chitrashva, Chitradarshana, Charuchitra, Sucharu, Nanda and Upanandaka. But the great-souled Abhimanyu swiftly wounded each of them with five straight-tufted arrows. These were like the vajra, or like death itself, and were released from his colourful bow. All of them were unable to tolerate this. They showered down sharp arrows on the supreme chariot of Subhadra’s son, like clouds showering down on Mount Meru. Though he was skilled in weapons and invincible in battle, he was oppressed in that encounter. O great king! But Abhimanyu made all of them tremble, like the wielder of the vajra against the great asuras, in the battle between the gods and the asuras. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The foremost among charioteers despatched fourteen broad-headed and terrible arrows towards Vikarna. They were like venomous serpents. With these, he cut down his standard, his chariot and his horses and seemed to be dancing around in the battle. Subhadra’s immensely strong son then again used yellow arrows that did not waver from their course. They were pointed and had been sharpened on stone and were shafted with the feathers of herons

and peacocks. They descended on Vikarna and pierced his body. Having done this, they penetrated the ground, like flaming serpents. Those gold-tufted and gold-tipped arrows could be seen stuck to the ground. They were drenched with Vikarna's blood and seemed to be vomiting blood. On seeing that Vikarna had been thus wounded in the battle, all his other brothers attacked those charioteers, with Subhadra's son at the forefront. They swiftly advanced on their own chariots and attacked those other chariots, which were as radiant as the sun. Invincible in battle, they began to pierce each other in that encounter.

“Durmukha pierced Shrutakarma²⁵³ with seven swift arrows, sliced down his standard with one and pierced his charioteer with seven. Shrutakarma's horses were caparisoned with nets of gold and were as fleet as the wind. He advanced closer and killed them with six arrows and then brought down his charioteer. But despite his horses having been slain, maharatha Shrutakarma remained stationed on the chariot. In great anger, he hurled a flaming javelin that was like a giant meteor. The illustrious Durmukha's large armour was penetrated. Having shattered the armour, it penetrated the ground, blazing in its great energy. The immensely strong Sutasoma saw that he²⁵⁴ was without a chariot. While all the soldiers looked on, he took him up on his own chariot. O king! The brave Shrutakirti²⁵⁵ then attacked your son Jayatsena in that battle, wishing to kill the illustrious one. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the great-souled Shrutakirti stretched his bow in battle, smilingly, your son, Jayatsena, sliced it down with an extremely sharp kshurapra arrow. Shatanika saw that his brother's bow had been sliced down. The energetic one swiftly arrived there, roaring repeatedly like a lion. In that battle, Shatanika firmly drew his bow and pierced Jayatsena with ten arrows. Using another extremely sharp arrow that was capable of penetrating all kinds of armour, Shatanika powerfully struck Jayatsena in the chest. Dushkarna was near his brother then. Senseless with rage, he sliced down the bow of Nakula's son in that battle. However, the immensely strong Shatanika took up another supreme bow that was capable of bearing a

great load and affixed sharp arrows. In the presence of his brother,²⁵⁶ he asked Dushkarna to wait and released sharp arrows that were like flaming serpents. O venerable one! He sliced down his bow with one arrow and killed his charioteer with two. In that battle, he then pierced him with seven more. With twelve sharp arrows, the unblemished one killed all his horses, which were speckled and were as swift as the mind. In that battle, he used another broad-headed and well-released arrow to angrily pierce Dushkarna deeply in the chest. O king! On seeing that Dushkarna had been smitten,²⁵⁷ five maharathas surrounded Shatanika from all sides, wishing to kill him. They enveloped the illustrious Shatanika with a torrent of arrows.

“‘Extremely wrathful, the five brothers from Kekaya advanced to the attack. O great king! On seeing them advance, like elephants against giant elephants, your maharatha sons—Durmukha, Durjaya, the youthful Durmarshana, Shatrunjaya and Shatrusaha, all of them wrathful and illustrious, countered the brothers from Kekaya. Their chariots were like cities, with many colours and decorated with flags, and horses as fleet as thought had been yoked to them. The brave ones held supreme bows and were adorned with colourful armour and standards. They descended on the enemy soldiers, like lions moving from one forest to another forest. A tumultuous battle ensued, with chariots and elephants. It was extremely terrible, where they sought to kill each other. O king! Because of enmity towards each other, they increased the numbers in Yama’s kingdom. But since the sun was about to set, that extremely terrible battle lasted only for a short while. Thousands of charioteers and horse-riders were strewn around. Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, was excited with rage. He used straight-tufted arrows to slaughter the soldiers of the great-souled ones. He used his arrows to despatch the Panchala soldiers to Yama’s undecaying realm. O king! Having thus shattered the Pandava army, the great archer withdrew his soldiers and returned to his own camp. Having seen Dhrishtadyumna and Vrikodara, Dharmaraja inhaled the fragrances of their heads and happily retired to his own camp.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! Those brave ones were driven by enmity towards each other. They retired to their respective camps, drenched in blood. Having rested for some time, they honoured each other in accordance with the proper forms. They were then seen armoured again, desiring to do battle. O king! Your son was overwhelmed with anxiety and blood was trickling from his limbs. He told the grandfather, ‘Our soldiers are terrible and fierce. They are arrayed and bear many standards. But the brave Pandava rathas have swiftly shattered, slain and oppressed us. Having confounded all our warriors, they have obtained fame. The makara vyuha was like the vajra. But Bhima penetrated it and wounded me with arrows that were like the staff of death. O king! On seeing him enraged, I was overcome with fear and lost my senses. I cannot find peace even now. You are truthful in your vows. Through your favours, I wish to obtain victory and slay the Pandavas.’ When he was thus addressed, Ganga’s great-souled son, foremost among the wielders of weapons, knew that Duryodhana was overcome by grief. Though his mind was distracted, the intelligent one replied, ‘O prince! I will make supreme efforts to penetrate their army, as much as I can. I wish to grant you victory and joy. But I will not hide anything for your sake. These maharathas are terrible and many. There are illustrious and supreme among brave ones. They are skilled in the use of weapons. They have become the aides of the Pandavas in battle. They have overcome fatigue and they are vomiting the venom of their wrath. Those brave ones are firm in their enmity towards you. They are incapable of being vanquished easily. O king! O brave one! But for your sake, I will strive against them to the best of my ability, giving up my life. O high-minded one! In this battle, for your sake, I will no longer attempt to remain alive today. For your sake, I will take on the gods, the daityas and all the worlds, not to speak of the enemies here. O king! To bring you pleasure, I will fight with the Pandavas and do everything that you desire.’ On hearing these words, Duryodhana was supremely content and delighted.

“He cheerfully instructed all the soldiers and all the kings to advance. On hearing his instructions, the chariots, horses, infantry and elephants began to advance. O king! They were happy and were armed with a large number and many kinds of weapons. O king! With elephants, horses and infantry, your army was extremely resplendent. There were masses of tuskers, stationed in arrays and commanded well. The warriors, gods among men and skilled in the use of weapons, stationed themselves amidst the masses of soldiers. The arrays of chariots, infantry, elephants and horses advanced, proceeding along the proper formations. They raised a dust that was tinged like the morning sun and shrouded the sun’s rays. There were bright standards on chariots and elephants. In every direction, they fluttered in the air. O king! In that battle, their different colours looked like clouds tinged with lightning in the sky. The kings twanged their bows and a tumultuous and terrible sound arose. This was like the roar of the ocean, when it was churned by the gods and the great asuras in the first yuga.²⁵⁸ With that great roar and with many forms and colours, the army of your sons was greatly agitated. The soldiers were ready to kill the soldiers of the enemy and looked like masses of clouds at the end of a yuga.”

CHAPTER 937(77)

‘Sanjaya said, “O foremost amongst the Bharata lineage! Gangeya saw that your son was still immersed in thought. He then again spoke these pleasing words to him. ‘O king! I, Drona, Shalya, Satvata Kritavarma, Ashvatthama, Vikarna, Somadatta’s son, Saindhava, Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti, Bahlika and the Bahlika forces, the powerful king of Trigarta, the invincible king of Magadha, Brihadbala from Kosala, Chitrasena, Vivimshati, many thousand rathas with radiant and giant standards, horses from many countries and horse-riders astride them, crazy kings of elephants with musth issuing from their shattered temples and mouths, brave infantry armed with many different kinds of weapons, warriors with raised weapons who have assembled in your cause from many countries—

these and many others have assembled in your cause, ready to give up their lives. It is my view that they are capable of defeating even the gods in battle. O king! But I must always tell you words that are for your own welfare. The Pandavas are incapable of being vanquished, even by the gods, with Vasava. They have Vasudeva as their aide and are like the great Indra in their valour. O Indra among kings! In every way, I will act according to your words. I will defeat the Pandavas in battle, or they will defeat me.’ Having thus spoken, he gave him the sacred *vishalyakarani*.²⁵⁹ This herb possessed great efficacy and he²⁶⁰ used it to heal his wounds.

“‘When it was morning and the sky was clear, the valiant Bhishma, skilled about vyuhas, himself arranged his soldiers in an array that was in the form of the *mandala* vyuha.²⁶¹ O foremost among men! It abounded in many different kinds of weapons. It was full of the foremost warriors, tuskers and infantry. There were many thousands of chariots in every direction. There were large numbers of horse-riders, wielding swords and lances. There were seven chariots near every elephant and there were seven horses near every chariot. There were ten archers near every horse-rider and there were seven with shields near every archer. O great king! Such was the vyuha in which your maharatha soldiers were arrayed. Protected by Bhishma, they were stationed, ready for the great battle. Ten thousand horses, as many elephants, ten thousand chariots and your armoured sons, the brave Chitrasena and the others, protected the grandfather. He was seen to be protected by those brave ones and those immensely strong kings were themselves armoured. In that battle, Duryodhana was armoured and was stationed on his chariot. He blazed in prosperity, like Shakra in heaven. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! A great roar arose from the army of your sons. There was the tumultuous sound of chariot wheels and the noise made by musical instruments. Arrayed by Bhishma, the battle formation of the sons of Dhritarashtra advanced towards the west. It was in the form of a giant vyuha known as *mandala*, impenetrable and the destroyer of the enemy. O king! It was

beautiful in every direction and was incapable of being assailed by the enemy.

“On seeing the extremely terrible vyuha known as mandala, King Yudhishtira himself created the vyuha known as vajra. The different divisions were stationed in the form of this array. The charioteers and horse-riders roared like lions. Desiring to do battle, the warriors wished to break each other’s vyuhas. Here and there, with their soldiers, the brave ones began to strike. Bharadvaja’s son advanced against Matsya and Drona’s son against Shikhandi. King Duryodhana attacked Parshata himself. O king! Nakula and Sahadeva advanced against the lord of Madra. Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti attacked Iravat.²⁶² In that encounter, all the kings fought against Dhananjaya. Bhimasena strove in that battle and countered Hardikya.²⁶³ O king! In that battle, Arjuna’s illustrious son²⁶⁴ fought with your sons Chitrasena, Vikarna and Durmarshana. Hidimba’s son, supreme among rakshasas, advanced forcefully against the great archer from Pragjyotisha and it was like a crazy elephant encountering another crazy elephant.²⁶⁵ O king! The rakshasa Alambusa was enraged in that war. He attacked Satyaki, invincible in battle, together with his soldiers. Bhurishrava made every effort in that battle and fought against Dhrishtaketu. Yudhishtira, Dharma’s son, confronted King Shrutayu.²⁶⁶ In that battle, Chekitana fought against Kripa. The remaining ones fought against maharatha Bhima.

“Thousands of kings surrounded Dhananjaya, with spears, lances, iron arrows, maces and clubs in their hands. Arjuna became extremely angry and told Varshneya, ‘O Madhava! Look at the soldiers of the sons of Dhritarashtra, arrayed for battle. They have been arranged in this formation by the great-souled Gangeya, knowledgeable about vyuhas. O Madhava! Look at these armoured and brave ones, wishing to do battle. O Keshava! Behold the king of Trigarta, together with his brothers. O Janardana! While you look on, I will kill all of them today. O foremost among the Yadu lineage! They are wishing to fight against me in this field of battle.’ Having spoken thus, Kounteya touched the string of his bow and

showered arrows towards the masses of kings. Those supreme archers also showered back arrows in return and it was like clouds pouring down onto a lake during the monsoon season. O lord of the earth! In that great battle, the two Krishnas were seen to be completely covered through those showers of arrows and a great lamentation arose amidst the soldiers. The gods, the devarshis, the gandharvas and the giant serpents were struck with great wonder, when they saw the two Krishnas in that state. O king! At this, Arjuna was enraged and unleashed the *aindra*²⁶⁷ weapon. We witnessed Vijaya's extraordinary valour. The showers of weapons released by his enemies were repulsed by his innumerable arrows. O lord of the earth! Among those thousands of kings, horses and elephants, there was not a single one who was not wounded. O venerable one! Partha pierced others with two or three arrows each. Having been thus killed by Partha, they sought refuge with Bhishma, Shantanu's son. At that time, they seemed to be immersed in fathomless waters and Bhishma became their protector. Your soldiers confronted a calamity there and were scattered. O great king! They were agitated, like the great ocean in a storm.”

CHAPTER 938(78)

‘Sanjaya said, “Susharma²⁶⁸ retreated from the battle. The brave ones were routed by the great-souled Pandava. However, the battle continued. Your army, which was like the ocean, had been agitated. Gangeya swiftly advanced towards Vijaya. O king! On witnessing Partha's valour in battle, Duryodhana hastened towards all those kings and spoke to them. The brave and immensely strong Susharma was at the forefront and was stationed in the midst of all the soldiers. These words delighted them. ‘This Bhishma, Shantanu's son, wishes to fight with Dhananjaya with all his heart. He is the best of the Kurus and is willing to give up his own life. With all the soldiers of the Bharata army, he will advance against the army of the enemy. All of you unite in the battle and protect the grandfather.’ O great king! Having been thus urged, all the divisions of all those kings of men followed the grandfather. Bhishma, Shantanu's son, swiftly went to

where Arjuna was and the immensely strong one of the Bharata lineage had also been advancing towards him. He was resplendent on a great chariot that roared like the clouds. Large white horses were yoked to it and the terrible ape was on the standard. On seeing Dhananjaya Kiriti advance in battle, all the soldiers in your army were frightened and let out a tumultuous roar. Krishna held the reins in that battle and looked as dazzling as the sun in midday. They were unable of glancing at him. Like that, the Pandavas were incapable of glancing at Bhishma, Shantanu's son. His horses were white and he held a white bow. He looked like the white planet when it has risen.²⁶⁹ He was surrounded on every side by the extremely great-souled Trigarta and his brothers, your sons and many other maharathas.

“Bharadvaja's son pierced Matsya with an arrow in that encounter. He brought his standard down with one arrow and sliced down his bow with another. Discarding his broken bow, Virata, the leader of an army, quickly took up another bow that was powerful and could bear a great burden. He used venomous arrows that were like flaming serpents. He pierced Drona with three of these and his horses with four. He pierced his standard with one and his charioteer with five. With a single arrow, he pierced his bow. Drona, bull among brahmanas, became angry. O foremost among the Bharata lineage! Using eight straight-tufted arrows, he killed his horses and his charioteer with a single one. With his horses slain and his charioteer also slain, the best of charioteers jumped down from his chariot and swiftly ascended Shankha's chariot.²⁷⁰ The father and the son were on the same chariot and powerfully countered Bharadvaja's son with a great shower of arrows. O lord of men! Bharadvaja's son became enraged in that battle. He despatched an arrow that was like a venomous serpent towards Shankha. In that encounter, it pierced his heart and drank up his blood. Then the arrow fell down on the ground, smeared in blood. Killed by the arrow released by Bharadvaja's son, he fell down from the chariot. While his father looked on, the bow and arrows dropped from his grasp. On seeing that his son had been killed, Virata gave up the fight and fled in

fear. Drona was like death with a gaping mouth. Bharadvaja's son swiftly attacked the great army of the Pandavas. In that battle, he scattered hundreds and thousands of them.

“O great king! Shikhandi confronted Drona's son in battle and struck him between the brows with three swift and iron arrows. With those three adhering to his forehead, that tiger among men looked like Mount Meru with three golden peaks. O king! Ashvatthama became angry. In that encounter, in an instant, he showered down many arrows at Shikhandi's charioteer, standard, horses and weapon and brought them down. With his horses slain, the supreme of rathas descended from his chariot. He grasped a sharp sword and a polished shield. O great king! Shikhandi, the scorcher of enemies, strode around in the field of battle with a sword, like an angry hawk. Drona's son did not find an opportunity to strike him and it was extraordinary. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Supremely enraged, Drona's son unleashed many thousand arrows in that battle. But when that extremely terrible shower of arrows descended in that encounter, the supreme among strong ones struck them down with his sharp sword. The shield was polished and was decorated with a hundred moons on it. In that encounter, Drona's son shattered his shield and his sword. O king! He pierced him with many sharp arrows. Though pierced and wounded, Shikhandi whirled the fragment of the sword that had been shattered by the arrows and swiftly hurled it, like a blazing serpent. It suddenly descended, as radiant as the fire of destruction. But in that encounter, Drona's son displayed the dexterity of his hands. He sliced it down and pierced Shikhandi with many iron arrows. O king! Shikhandi was severely wounded by those sharp arrows. He quickly ascended the chariot of the great-souled Madhava.²⁷¹

“The angry Satyaki, strongest among strong ones, attacked the cruel rakshasa Alambusa in that battle and pierced him with many terrible arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But in that encounter, the Indra among rakshasas sliced his bow down with an arrow that was in the shape of a half-moon and pierced him with many arrows. He used the maya of rakshasas and showered down arrows on him. We then witnessed

the extraordinary valour of Shini's descendant. Despite being pierced by sharp arrows in that encounter, he disregarded them. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Varshneya then invoked the aindra weapon, which the illustrious Madhava had obtained from Vijaya.²⁷² Using that weapon, he reduced the maya of rakshasas to ashes. From every direction, he showered Alambusa with terrible arrows, like the slayer of Bala²⁷³ showering rain on mountains. He was thus oppressed by the great-souled Madhava. Out of fear, the rakshasa gave up the fight with Satyaki and fled. While your warriors looked on, Shini's descendant triumphed over the Indra among rakshasas, whom even Maghavan found difficult to defeat, and roared. Satyaki, with truth as his valour, killed your soldiers with many sharp arrows and they ran away in fear.

“O great king! At that time, Dhrishtadyumna, Drupada's powerful son, encountered your son, lord among men, and in that encounter, enveloped him with straight-tufted arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He was shrouded by Dhrishtadyumna's arrows. But your son, lord of men and Indra among kings, was not perturbed. In that encounter, he pierced Dhrishtadyumna back with ninety arrows and it was extremely wonderful. O venerable one! The commander²⁷⁴ became angry and sliced his bow down. The maharatha swiftly killed his four horses and quickly pierced him with seven extremely sharp arrows. When his horses were killed, the mighty-armed one, strong among rathas, leapt down from his chariot. He advanced on foot towards Parshata, with a sword in his hand. The immensely strong Shakuni, who was devoted to the king, arrived. He took the king of all the worlds up on his own chariot. Having defeated the king, Parshata, the destroyer of enemy heroes, began to slaughter your troops, like the wielder of the vajra against the asuras.

“In that battle, Kritavarma attacked maharatha Bhima and covered him with arrows. He was enveloped, like the sun with large clouds. But Bhimasena, scorcher of enemies, laughed in that battle. Extremely angry, he unleashed arrows on Kritavarma. O great king! But the atiratha from the Satvata lineage, skilled in the use of weapons, did not waver. He

enveloped Bhima with sharp arrows. The immensely strong Bhimasena killed his four horses. He brought down his charioteer and his beautiful standard. The destroyer of enemy heroes covered him with many arrows. He was wounded in every limb and looked like a porcupine. O great king! With his horses slain, he quickly abandoned his chariot and went to the chariot of your brother-in-law Vrishaka, while your son looked on.²⁷⁵ Bhimasena angrily rushed to attack your soldiers. He began to slaughter them in great rage, like Death with a staff in his hand.”

CHAPTER 939(79)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! As you have described them, I have heard about the many wonderful duels that took place between those on the side of the sons of Pandu and those on my side. O Sanjaya! But you have never spoken about those on my side being happy. You have always described the sons of Pandu as happy and as those who are never routed. O suta! You have spoken about those on my side being distressed and deprived of energy in the battle. There is no doubt that this is because of destiny.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O bull among men! Those on your side are striving to do battle, to the best of their capacity and the best of their enterprise. They are displaying supreme manliness, to the best of their capability. The water of Ganga, the river of the gods, is sweet. But when it merges into the great ocean, it attains the quality of salinity. O king! The manliness of the great-souled ones on your side is like that. When they confront the brave sons of Pandu in battle, they obtain no success. They are trying to the best of their strength and are performing extremely difficult tasks. O foremost among the Kurus! You should not censure them because they have merged with the Kouravas. O lord of the earth! This great and terrible destruction of the earth, and the extension of Yama’s kingdom, has come about because of your crimes and those of your sons. O king! Since it is because of your own sins, you should not grieve over this. The lords of the earth desire the worlds that can be obtained by performing good deeds in battle. Striving for heaven, they are fighting and penetrating the army formations. O great

king! On the forenoon of that day, there was a great destruction of people, like that in the battle between the gods and the asuras. Listen with single-minded attention.

“The two great-souled and great archers from Avanti, immensely strong, saw Iravat in that battle and encountered him with ferocity. The battle that took place between them was tumultuous and made the body hair stand up. Iravat was extremely enraged. He quickly pierced those brothers, who were like gods, with sharp and straight-tufted arrows. In that encounter, those wonderful warriors pierced him back. O king! They fought on and there was nothing to differentiate the two parties. They sought to kill the enemy and neutralized each other’s endeavours. O king! Iravat used four arrows to despatch his four horses to Yama’s abode.²⁷⁶ O venerable one! With two extremely sharp and broad-headed arrows, he sliced off his bow and standard. O king! In that encounter, this was extraordinary. At this, Anuvinda discarded his chariot and climbed onto Vinda’s chariot. He grasped a supreme and new bow that was capable of bearing a great burden. In that battle, those two brave ones from Avanti, supreme among rathas, were stationed on the same chariot. They swiftly showered arrows on the great-souled Iravat. They released extremely swift arrows, decorated with gold. They covered the sky and reached the path of the sun. Iravat became extremely angry in that battle and showered down arrows on those maharatha brothers. He brought down their charioteer. Having lost his life, the charioteer fell down on the ground. The horses were no longer controlled and dragged the chariot off in various directions. O great king! The son of the naga king’s daughter triumphed in this way. He quickly displayed his manliness and began to slaughter your soldiers. Thus killed in battle, the great army of the sons of Dhritarashtra reeled around in many directions, like a man who has drunk poison.

“Hidimba’s son, Indra among the rakshasas, advanced against Bhagadatta. The immensely strong one was on a chariot that had the complexion of the sun and possessed a standard. The king of Pragjyotisha was seated on a king of elephants, like the wielder of the vajra in ancient

times, in the *tarakamaya* battle.²⁷⁷ The gods, together with the gandharvas, and the rishis assembled and were unable to differentiate between Hidimba's son and Bhagadatta. Just as Shakra, the lord of the gods, had driven the danavas away with weapons, in that encounter, the king²⁷⁸ drove the Pandavas away in all directions. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The Pandavas were driven away in all the directions and within their own ranks, could not find a single one who could protect them. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But we saw Bhimasena's son stationed on his chariot there, though the other maharathas had fled with dispirited hearts. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the soldiers of the Pandus returned again, in that encounter, your soldiers let out a terrible roar. O king! In that great battle, Ghatotkacha enveloped Bhagadatta with arrows, like clouds raining down on Mount Meru. The king repulsed the arrows released from the rakshasa's bow and in that battle, quickly pierced Bhimasena's son in all his inner organs. He oppressed him with many straight-tufted arrows. But the Indra among rakshasas was not distressed and was like an immobile mountain. At this, Pragjyotisha became angry. In that encounter, he hurled fourteen javelins. However, the rakshasa sliced them down. Having sliced the javelins down with his sharp arrows, the mighty-armed one pierced Bhagadatta with seventy gold-tufted arrows. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But Pragjyotisha only laughed. In that battle, he used arrows to bring down his four horses. Though the horses were slain, the powerful Indra among rakshasas remained stationed on his chariot. He powerfully hurled a javelin towards Pragjyotisha's elephant. This possessed a golden shaft and was extremely swift. As it suddenly descended, the king cut it down into three and shattered, it fell down on the ground. On seeing that the javelin had been destroyed, Hidimba's son fled and left the field of battle, like in ancient times, Namuchi, supreme among daityas, had fled from Indra.²⁷⁹ The brave and valiant one,²⁸⁰ famous for his manliness, won that battle. O king! He was invincible in battle, like Yama and Varuna. O king! In that

battle, he began to crush the Pandava soldiers with his elephant, like a wild elephant destroying the stalks of lotuses.

“In that battle, the lord of Madra fought with the twins, the sons of his sister. He enveloped the sons of Pandu with a cloud of arrows. Finding himself engaged in battle with his maternal uncle, Sahadeva repulsed him with a shower of arrows, like clouds shrouding the sun. Covered by that shower of arrows, he seemed to be happy.²⁸¹ On account of their mother, the twins were also extremely delighted. O king! In that battle, smilingly, the maharatha²⁸² used four supreme arrows to despatch Nakula’s four horses to Yama’s abode. With the horses slain, the maharatha²⁸³ quickly descended from his chariot and ascended onto his illustrious brother’s vehicle. In that battle, the brave ones stretched their bows while stationed on the same chariot. In a short while, they angrily covered the chariot of the king of Madra with arrows. He was shrouded with many straight-tufted arrows released by his sister’s sons. But the tiger among men did not waver and was like a mountain. As if laughing, he destroyed that shower of arrows. Sahadeva became angry. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The valiant one picked up an arrow and released it in the direction of the king of Madra. That arrow released by him was as forceful as Garuda. It pierced the king of Madra and fell down on the ground. Having been severely wounded and pained, the maharatha sat down on the floor of his chariot. O great king! He lost his consciousness. On seeing that he had fallen down and had lost his senses in that encounter and had been oppressed by the twins, his charioteer drove his chariot away. On seeing that the chariot of the lord of Madra had retreated, the sons of Dhritarashtra lost heart. All of them were distressed and thought that he was no longer alive. Having vanquished their maternal uncle in battle, Madri’s maharatha sons were delighted. They blew their conch shells and roared like lions. O lord of the earth! O king! Filled with joy, they attacked your soldiers, like the immortal Indra and Upendra²⁸⁴ attacking the army of the daityas.”

‘Sanjaya said, “When the sun reached the midpoint, King Yudhishtira saw Shrutayu and urged his horses towards him. The king attacked Shrutayu, the scorcher of enemies and pierced him with nine sharp and straight-tufted arrows. But, in that encounter, the king, the great archer, countered the arrows shot by Dharma’s son and struck Kounteya with seven arrows. In that battle, these penetrated his armour and drank up his blood, as if all the vital forces in the great-souled one’s body had been sucked out. Pandava was severely wounded by the great-souled king. However, in that encounter, he pierced the king in the heart with an arrow that was like a boar’s ear. With another broad-headed arrow, Partha, foremost among rathas, quickly brought down the great-souled one’s standard from his chariot and made it fall down on the ground. O king! On seeing that his standard had been brought down, King Shrutayu pierced Pandava with seven sharp arrows. At this, Yudhishtira, Dharma’s son, blazed up in anger, like the fire that burns at the end of a yuga and consumes all beings. O great king! On seeing Pandava enraged, the gods, the gandharvas and the rakshasas were pained and anxious. All the beings thought that, thus enraged, the king would destroy the three worlds then. O king! When Pandava was thus angered, the rishis and the gods uttered great words of benediction so that there might be peace in the worlds. He was overcome with rage and licked the corners of his mouth. His appearance was as terrible as that of the sun at the time of the destruction of a yuga. O lord of the earth! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the soldiers in your army became distressed and thought that they would no longer remain alive. But the immensely famous one controlled his anger through patience. He sliced down Shrutayu’s great bow from his hand. After the bow had been sliced down, while all the soldiers looked on in that battle, the king used an iron arrow to pierce him between the breasts. O king! Nimble on his feet, the great-souled and extremely strong one, then used sharp arrows to kill his mounts and his charioteer. On witnessing the king’s manliness and with his horses slain, Shrutayu gave up his chariot and swiftly fled from the field of battle. Dharma’s son defeated the

great archer in that encounter. O king! Because of this, all of Duryodhana's soldiers became reluctant to do battle. O great king! Having accomplished this, Yudhishtira, Dharma's son, began to slaughter your soldiers, like Death with a gaping mouth.

“While all the soldiers looked on, Varshneya Chekitana enveloped Goutama, supreme among charioteers, with arrows. In that encounter, Kripa, Sharadvat's son, countered all those arrows. O king! Fighting with care in that battle, he pierced Chekitana with arrows. O venerable one! He used another broad-headed arrow to slice down his bow. Displaying his lightness of hand in that encounter, he brought down his charioteer. O king! He killed his horses and the two charioteers who protected his flanks.²⁸⁵ Satvata²⁸⁶ swiftly leapt down from his chariot and grabbed a club. With that club, capable of killing heroes, that supreme among wielders of clubs killed Goutama's horses and brought down his charioteer. Goutama stood on the ground and shot sixteen arrows at him. Those arrows pierced Satvata and entered the ground. Chekitana became angry. Wishing to kill Goutama, like Purandara against Vritra, he again hurled his club. That polished and great club was as hard as stone. On seeing it descend, Goutama repulsed it with thousands of arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Chekitana drew his sword out from its sheath. With supreme lightness, he attacked Goutama. Goutama discarded his bow and took up an extremely sharp sword. O king! He advanced with great speed towards Chekitana. Both of them were extremely strong and both wielded supreme swords. They began to strike each other with those extremely sharp swords. Those bulls among men were struck with the force of each other's swords and fell down on the ground, the abode of all beings. Their limbs became unconscious and they were exhausted because of their exertions. Because of his affectionate feelings, Karakarsha, invincible in battle, swiftly rushed to the spot. He saw that Chekitana was in that state and while all the soldiers looked on, took him up on his own chariot. O lord of the earth! The brave Shakuni, your brother-in-law, swiftly took Goutama, supreme among rathas, up on his chariot.

“O king! In anger, the immensely strong Dhrishtaketu pierced Somadatta’s son²⁸⁷ in the chest with ninety arrows. O great king! With those arrows on his chest, Somadatta’s son looked resplendent, like the sun with its rays at midday. However, in that battle, Bhurishrava killed maharatha Dhrishtaketu’s horses and charioteers with supreme arrows and he was deprived of his chariot. On seeing that he had been deprived of his chariot and that his horses and his charioteer had been slain in that encounter, he enveloped him with a great shower of arrows. O venerable one! The great-minded Dhrishtaketu then abandoned his chariot and ascended Shatanika’s vehicle.

“O king! The rathas Chitrasena, Vikarna and Durmarshana were clad in golden armour and attacked Subhadra’s son. O king! A terrible encounter commenced between Abhimanyu and those armed ones, like that in the body between *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*.²⁸⁸ O king! In that great battle, he deprived your sons of their chariots. But remembering Bhima’s pledge, the tiger among men did not kill them.²⁸⁹ Bhishma was unassailable, even to the gods. In that battle, surrounded by many kings and hundreds of elephants, horses and chariots, he swiftly advanced to rescue your sons. On seeing this and on seeing that maharatha Abhimanyu, who was only a child, was alone, Kounteya, the one borne on white steeds, told Vasudeva, ‘O Hrishikesha! Drive the horses to the spot where those numerous chariots are. There are many brave ones there, skilled in the use of weapons and invincible in battle. O Madhava! Drive the horses so that they cannot slay our soldiers.’ Thus urged by the infinitely energetic Kounteya, in that encounter, Varshneya drove the chariot yoked to the white horses there. O venerable one! When Arjuna angrily advanced into battle, a great uproar was created by your troops. Kounteya advanced to the kings who were protecting Bhishma. O king! He spoke these words to Susharma. ‘I know that you are the foremost among warriors and that you bear extreme enmity towards us from earlier times. You will now behold the extremely terrible fruits of that. I will today show you your deceased ancestors.’ Having heard these harsh words spoken by Bibhatsu, the slayer

of enemies, Susharma, the leader of a large number of charioteers, did not speak anything in reply, pleasant or unpleasant. But he advanced against the brave Arjuna, surrounded by a large number of kings. O unblemished one! In that battle, Arjuna was surrounded by your sons from every direction, to the front, the rear and the sides. They enveloped him with arrows, like clouds covering the sun. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! An extremely terrible battle commenced between those on your side and the Pandavas and in that encounter, blood flowed like water.”

CHAPTER 941(81)

‘Sanjaya said, “The powerful Dhananjaya was breathing like a snake that had been trodden on with the foot. He raised his arrows. In that battle, he continuously used arrows to slice down the bows of those maharathas. In that battle, he instantly sliced down the bows of those valiant kings. The great-souled one simultaneously pierced them with arrows, wishing to slay those illustrious ones. O king! Some of those kings fell down on the ground, drenched in blood. They were oppressed by Shakra’s son. Their bodies were mangled and their heads fell down. Some died because their armour and their bodies were penetrated. They were overcome by Partha’s strength and resorted to the ground. They assumed wonderful forms and were simultaneously destroyed. On seeing that those warriors and princes had perished, the king of Trigarta quickly advanced towards Partha. Thirty-two charioteers, who were protecting from the rear, were also with him. They surrounded Partha and drew their bows with a loud noise. They showered him with a great rain of arrows, like clouds pouring down rain on a mountain. In that encounter, Dhananjaya was oppressed by that shower of arrows and anger was engendered in him. He used sixty arrows that had been washed in oil and killed the ones who had been protecting from the rear. Having vanquished the sixty rathas, the illustrious Dhananjaya was delighted.²⁹⁰ Having killed the forces of those kings, Jishnu advanced to slay Bhishma. The king of Trigarta saw that the ranks of his maharatha relatives had been killed. He swiftly advanced to kill

Partha in battle, with the lords of the earth following him. On seeing that they were advancing against Dhananjaya, foremost among the wielders of weapons, with Shikhandi at the forefront, they²⁹¹ advanced to protect Arjuna's chariot. They raised sharp weapons in their hands. Partha also saw that those brave ones were advancing against him, together with the king of Trigarta. In that battle, he pierced them with sharp arrows shot from the bow Gandiva. The skilled warrior wished to fight with Bhishma and saw Duryodhana and Saindhava and the other kings. For a brief moment, the brave Jishnu used his strength to counter them. But then the infinitely valorous and greatly energetic one avoided those kings, Jayadratha and the other kings. With a bow and arrow in his hand, the spirited one, terrible in his strength, went to where Gangeya was.

“The great-souled Yudhishtira, terrible in his strength, also advanced swiftly, his anger having been excited. In that encounter, he avoided the lord of Madra, whose deeds were infinite and who had been assigned as his share.²⁹² To do battle, with the sons of Madri and Bhimasena, he went to the spot where Bhishma, Shantanu's son, was stationed. Ganga's son was wonderful in battle. He was set upon by all the maharathas together. But Shantanu's great-souled son was not distracted. King Jayadratha was terrible in his valour and spirited. He was a warrior who was unwavering in his aim. He advanced against those maharathas and sliced down their bows with his supreme bow. The great-souled Duryodhana was overcome with the poison of anger. His wrath having been ignited, he used arrows that were like fire to fight with Yudhishtira, Bhimasena, the twins and Partha. They were also pierced with arrows shot by Kripa, Shalya, Shala and the lord Chitrasena and their²⁹³ anger increased, like the gods when they confronted the assembled daityas. Shikhandi's weapon had been sliced down by the king who was Shantanu's son. On seeing that he was running away in that battle, the great-souled Ajatashatru became wrathful and spoke these words of anger to Shikhandi. ‘You spoke these words to me, in the presence of your father. “Using arrows that are clear and have the complexion of the sun, I will kill Bhishma, who is great in his vows. I

say this truthfully.” This was the pledge you took and you are not making it come true. You are not killing Devavrata in battle. O brave one among men! You have become false in your oath. Protect your dharma and the fame of your lineage. Behold. Bhishma is fighting with terrible force. He is tormenting the masses of my soldiers. The net of his arrows is fierce in its energy. Like Death himself, he is killing everything in an instant. Your bow has been sliced down by the king who is Shantanu’s son. You have been vanquished and are running away from the field of battle. You are abandoning your relatives and your brothers. Where are you going! This is not becoming of you. Bhishma is infinite in his valour. On seeing him, our soldiers are routed and are fleeing. O Drupada’s son! You are certainly frightened. The complexion of your face is distressed. O brave one among men! Honouring his commands, Dhananjaya is engaged in this great battle. O brave one! You are famous on earth! Why are you now frightened of Bhishma?’ Dharmaraja’s words were harsh. But he heard them and perceived them to be full of sound reason. O king! Having honoured these instructions, the great-souled one swiftly set about the task of killing Bhishma.

“Shikhandi advanced towards Bhishma with great force. Shalya countered him with weapons that were terrible and extremely difficult to resist. O king! However, Drupada’s son was like Indra in his power. He saw those weapons, which were as powerful as the fire at the destruction of a yuga, and was not confounded at all. The great archer countered those weapons with his own arrows. To counter them, Shikhandi took up another terrible weapon known as Varuna. The gods stationed in the firmament and the sky saw those weapons²⁹⁴ repulsed by this weapon. O king! In that battle, the great-souled and brave Bhishma sliced down the bow and colourful standard of Pandu’s son, King Yudhishtira Ajamidha. On seeing that Yudhishtira was overcome with fear and had cast aside his bow and arrows in that battle, Bhimasena grabbed a club and advanced on foot against Jayadratha. On seeing Bhimasena advance with great speed with the club, Jayadratha pierced him from every direction with five hundred sharp and terrible arrows that were like Yama’s staff. But the swift

Vrikodara, his heart full of rage, paid no attention to these arrows. In that battle, he slew the mounts which bore the king of Sindhu in that encounter, ones that had been born in Aratta.²⁹⁵ Your son²⁹⁶ was unrivalled in his prowess and was like the king of the gods. On seeing Bhimasena, he swiftly advanced on his chariot to kill him, with his weapons raised. Bhima suddenly roared. Uttering threats, he rushed towards him with a club. In every direction, the Kurus saw this upraised club, like Yama's staff. All of them wished to avoid the descent of the terrible club and abandoned your son. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There was a tumultuous and extremely terrible melee and they were all confounded. But despite seeing the great club descend, Chitrasena did not lose his senses. He discarded his chariot and resorted to fighting on foot, grasping a polished sword and shield. He leapt down, like a lion from the peak of a mountain, and resorted to the face of the earth. In that battle, the club descended on the colourful chariot and killed the horses and the charioteer. It then fell down on the ground, like a flaming and giant meteor that has been dislodged from the sky and has fallen down. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On witnessing the extraordinary, extremely great and unrivalled feat accomplished by your son,²⁹⁷ all the soldiers were delighted and honoured him. They uttered a roar in every direction.”

CHAPTER 942(82)

‘Sanjaya said, “On seeing that the spirited Chitrasena was without a chariot, your son, Vikarna, picked him up on his own chariot. An extremely tumultuous and fierce battle raged there. Bhishma, Shantanu's son, swiftly attacked Yudhishtira. With their chariots, elephants and horses, the Srinjayas trembled. They thought that Yudhishtira was already inside the mouth of death. However, the lord Kouravya Yudhishtira, together with the twins, attacked the great archer and tiger among men, Bhishma, Shantanu's son. In that battle, Pandava shot thousands of arrows. They enveloped Bhishma, like clouds covering the sky. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Gangeya received a net of innumerable arrows, in

hundreds and thousands. O venerable one! Bhishma also released a net of arrows. It looked like a swarm travelling through the sky. In that battle, in an instant, Bhishma, Shantanu's son, made Kounteya invisible in the encounter through the net of arrows he shot in groups. King Yudhishtira was enraged and despatched an iron arrow at the great-souled Kouravya. It was like a virulent serpent. O king! But before it could reach him in that encounter, maharatha Bhishma used a kshurapra arrow to slice down the weapon released from the bow. Having destroyed the iron arrow in battle, which was like death, Bhishma killed the horses, decorated with gold, of the Indra among Kouravas. With the horses slain, Yudhishtira, Dharma's son, abandoned the chariot and swiftly ascended the chariot of the great-souled Nakula. Bhishma, the destroyer of enemy cities, was extremely enraged in that battle. He attacked the twins and covered them with arrows. O great king! On seeing that they were oppressed by Bhishma's arrows, he²⁹⁸ desired Bhishma's death and anxiously thought about the means.

“Yudhishtira addressed all the kings and well-wishers who were following him. ‘All of you unite and kill Bhishma, Shantanu's son.’ All the kings heard the words that Partha had addressed and they surrounded the grandfather with a large number of chariots. Your father, Devavrata, was surrounded in every direction. O king! He seemed to be playing with his bow and brought down those maharathas. While all the Parthas looked on, Kourava strode around on that field of battle, like a lion cub in the forest amidst a herd of deer. He roared in the battle and frightened the brave ones with his arrows. O great king! They were frightened on seeing him, like a herd of deer at a lion. The kshatriyas saw the movements of that lion among the Bharata lineage in that battle. He was like a fire consuming dry wood, aided by the wind. In that encounter, Bhishma brought down the heads of the rathas, like a skilled man bringing down ripe fruit from a palm tree. O great king! As those heads fell down on the ground, there was a tremendous sound, like that of stones falling down. There was a tumultuous and extremely terrible battle. There was great and extreme confusion among all those soldiers. The vyuhas of the kshatriyas were thus

shattered. In that battle, they challenged one another to a fight. Shikhandi forcefully approached the grandfather of the Bharatas, asking him to wait. But Bhishma avoided Shikhandi in that battle, remembering Shikhandi's feminine nature.²⁹⁹ Instead, he angrily attacked the Srinjayas. On seeing maharatha Bhishma, the Srinjayas were delighted. They roared like lions and uttered many other shouts. These mingled with the sound of conch shells. O lord! This was a time when the sun was stationed on the other side of the directions.³⁰⁰ A battle with chariots and elephants commenced.

“Panchala Dhrishtadyumna and maharatha Satyaki oppressed the soldiers terribly, using a shower of spears and javelins. O king! In that battle, they used many arrows to strike down those on your side. O bull among men! Though those on your side were killed in that battle, the noble ones were resolved to fight in that battle and did not retreat from the encounter. In that battle, those maharatha men strove to the best of their endeavours. But a great lamentation arose among the great-souled ones on your side. On hearing this terrible lamentation amidst the maharathas on your side, Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti attacked Parshata. Those swift maharathas slew his horses. They enveloped Parshata with a shower of arrows. At this, the extremely strong Panchala quickly jumped down from his chariot. He swiftly ascended the chariot of the extremely great-souled Satyaki. King Yudhishtira was surrounded by a large army. With this, in that battle, he angrily attacked the scorchers of enemies from Avanti. O venerable one! Your sons made every effort to surround Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti. O bull among the kshatriya lineage! Arjuna angrily fought against the kshatriyas. He fought in that battle, like the wielder of the vajra against the asuras. Drona was also angry in that battle, wishing to do that which would bring your son pleasure. He began to consume all the Panchalas, like a fire amidst a mass of cotton. O lord of the earth! With Duryodhana at the forefront, your sons surrounded Bhishma in that battle and fought against the Pandavas.

“O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the sun assumed a reddish tinge, King Duryodhana spoke to all those who were on your side. ‘Do not delay.’ They fought on and accomplished extremely difficult tasks. But the sun ascended the Asta mountain³⁰¹ and could no longer be seen. An extremely terrible river began to flow and its current and waves were made out of blood. It was infested with masses of jackals and it was the moment of twilight. Jackals let out fearful howls and it was inauspicious. The terrible field of battle was infested with the spirits of the dead. Rakshasas, pishachas and others who fed on flesh were seen in every direction, in hundreds and thousands. Arjuna vanquished the kings who followed Susharma, together with their followers. In the midst of his divisions, he then proceeded towards his own camp. O Indra among kings! Since it was night, surrounded by the soldiers and with his brothers, King Kourvaya Yudhishthira also went to his own camp. Having vanquished the rathas headed by Duryodhana in battle, Bhimasena also went to his own camp. In the great battle, Duryodhana was surrounded by the kings. With Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, he swiftly went to his camp. Surrounded by all their armies, Drona, Drona’s son, Kripa, Shalya and Satvata Kritavarma also went to their camps. O king! Surrounded in the battle by all the warriors, Satyaki and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna also went to their camps. O great king! When it was night, thus did the scorchers of enemies, on your side and on that of the Pandavas, retreat. The Pandavas and the Kurus went to their own camps. O great king! They entered and honoured each other. The brave ones made arrangements for protecting themselves and set up outposts, according to the prescribed methods. They removed the stakes³⁰² and bathed in different kinds of water. Benedictions were pronounced and all of them were praised by bards. Those illustrious ones sported, to the sound of singing and the playing of musical instruments. For a short while, everything seemed to be like heaven. The maharathas did not speak at all about what transpired in the battle. O king! Having been exhausted, all the people in the armies slept. O king! With the large numbers of elephants and horses, it was seen to be beautiful.”

‘Sanjaya said, “Those lords of men spent the night happily, engrossed in sleep. Then the Kurus and the Pandavas again emerged to fight. A great sound arose from both the armies, as they emerged to do battle. It was like the great ocean. King Duryodhana, Chitrasena, Vivimshati, Bhishma, supreme among rathas, and the brahmana who was Bharadvaja’s son united themselves and arrayed the great army of the Kouravas. O king! They armoured themselves and formed a vyuha to counter the Pandavas. O lord of the earth! Your father, Bhishma, constructed a great vyuha. It was as terrible as the ocean, with the mounts as its waves. Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, advanced at the forefront of all the soldiers. He was supported by the Malavas, those from the south and those from Avanti. Bharadvaja’s powerful son was next to him. The Pulindas, the Paradas and the lesser Malavas were with him. O lord of the earth! The powerful Bhagadatta was next to Drona, together with the Magadhas, the Kalingas and the Pishachas. Brihadbala, the king of Kosala, was behind Pragjyotisha, together with the Mekalas, the Tripuras and the Chichchilas. Next to Brihadbala was the brave Trigarta, the lord of Prasthala. He was accompanied by a large number of Kambojas and thousands of Yavanas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Drona’s brave son was next to Trigarta and advanced to do battle. He roared like a lion and made the earth resound. Surrounded by his brothers, Duryodhana was next to Drona’s son and Kripa Sharadvat was behind him. It was thus that the great vyuha advanced, like an ocean. O lord! There were resplendent flags and dazzling umbrellas. There were colourful bracelets and extremely expensive bows.

““On seeing the great vyuha of your soldiers, maharatha Yudhishtira quickly addressed Parshata, the supreme commander. ‘O great archer! Behold the vyuha that has been constructed. It is like an ocean. O Parshata! Without any delay, create a counter vyuha.’ Having been thus addressed, the brave Parshata constructed an extremely terrible vyuha. O great king! It was called Shringataka³⁰³ and it was destructive of the vyuhās of enemies. Bhimasena and maharatha Satyaki were at the two

horns, with many thousands of chariots, horses and infantry. The foremost of men, the one with the white horses and the ape on his standard, was next to them. King Yudhishtira was in the centre, with the Pandavas who were Madri's sons. Other kings who were great archers, skilled in the use of weapons, filled up the vyuha with their soldiers. Abhimanyu was at the rear, with maharatha Virata, Droupadi's delighted sons and the rakshasa Ghatotkacha. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus did the Pandavas array themselves in the form of a gigantic vyuha. The brave ones stationed themselves in that battle, wishing to fight and desiring victory. The tumultuous sound of drums mingled with the sound made by conch shells. Armpits were slapped and a terrible noise arose in all the directions.

“In that battle, the brave ones then confronted each other. O king! They glanced at each other in rage, without blinking their eyes. O Indra among men! They challenged each other, summoning each other by name first. A battle commenced. The battle that started was terrible in form and fearful. Those on your side, and those of the enemy, sought to kill each other. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Sharp iron arrows descended in that battle. They were like fearful snakes with gaping mouths. There were polished and extremely energetic lances that had been washed in oil. O king! They were as radiant as lightning³⁰⁴ in the clouds. There were polished and thick clubs, covered in cloth and decorated with gold. They were seen to descend, like beautiful summits of mountains. There were radiant swords, as clear as the sky. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were shields made out of the hides of bulls, with a hundred moons marked on them. O king! They were resplendent in that battle, as they descended in every direction. O lord of men! The two armies encountered each other in that battle. They dazzled like the armies of the gods and the daityas, when arrayed against each other. In that battle, they clashed against each other in every direction. In that supreme battle, chariots quickly clashed against chariots. As those bulls among men fought, the yokes of one got entangled with the yokes of another. O foremost among the Bharata lineage! Tuskers fought with tuskers and because of the friction, flames were seen in every direction, mingled with smoke. In all

directions, struck by lances, some warriors on elephants were seen to fall down, like the summits of mountains. Infantry was seen to kill each other. The brave ones fought in many colourful ways and used lances and bare nails. Thus did the soldiers of the Kurus and the Pandavas attack each other. Many terrible weapons were used in that battle, to despatch others to the eternal worlds.³⁰⁵ The chariot of Bhishma, Shantanu's son, roared in that battle. He advanced against the Pandus and confounded them with the twang of his bow. The chariots of the Pandavas also emitted a terrible roar. With Dhrishtadyumna at the forefront, they advanced together. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus did the battle between you and them commence. Men, horses, chariots and elephants got entangled with each other.”

CHAPTER 944(84)

‘Sanjaya said, “In that battle, the powerful Bhishma was enraged. Like the sun, he tormented in every direction and the Pandavas were incapable of glancing towards him. On the instructions of Dharma's son, all the soldiers rushed towards Gangeya, who was causing oppression with his sharp arrows. But the great archer Bhishma prided himself in battle. With his arrows, he brought down the Somakas, together with the Srinjayas and the Panchalas. Though they were slaughtered by Bhishma, the Panchalas and the Somakas gave up their fear of death and quickly attacked Bhishma. O king! In that battle, the brave Bhishma, Shantanu's son, powerfully sliced off the arms and the heads of those rathas. Your father, Devavrata, deprived the rathas of their chariots. The heads of horse-riders fell down from the horses. O great king! Confounded by Bhishma's weapons, we saw elephants lying around like mountains, deprived of their riders. O lord of the earth! Among the Pandavas, there was no one other than the immensely strong Bhimasena, foremost among rathas, who could resist him. In that encounter, he was the one who engaged Bhishma. There was a terrible battle between Bhishma and Bhima and an extremely terrible and fearful roar arose from all the soldiers.³⁰⁶ The delighted Pandavas also

roared like lions. Surrounded by his brothers, King Duryodhana protected Bhishma in that battle, which resulted in a destruction of men. Bhishma was supreme among rathas. But Bhima slew his charioteer. The horses were no longer controlled and dragged the chariot away in all directions.

“With a swift arrow, the destroyer of enemies sliced off Sunabha’s head. He was slain by that extremely sharp kshurapra and fell down on the ground. O great king! When your maharatha son was killed in that battle, seven of his brothers could not tolerate this. Adityaketu, Bahvashi, Kundadhara, Mahodara, Aparajita, Panditaka and the invincible Vishalaksha attacked Pandava in that encounter. They were clad in colourful armour and sported diverse standards. Those scorchers of enemies attacked in that battle, wishing to fight. In that encounter, Mahodara pierced Bhimasena with nine arrows, like the killer of Vritra against Namuchi. Each was like the vajra. Adityaketu pierced him with seventy, Bahvashi with five, Kundadhara with ninety and Vishalaksha with seven. O great king! Maharatha Aparajita, the vanquisher of enemies, pierced the immensely strong Bhimasena with many arrows. In that encounter, Panditaka also pierced him with three arrows. But in that battle, Bhima did not tolerate the attacks of his enemies. The destroyer of enemies grasped the bow in his left hand. Your son, Aparajita, possessed an excellent nose. In that battle, he used an arrow with a drooping tuft to slice off his head. In that encounter, he was defeated by Bhima and his head fell down on the ground. While all the people looked on, he used another broad-headed arrow to despatch maharatha Kundadhara to the land of the dead. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that battle, the one with the immeasurable soul then grasped another arrow and despatched it towards Panditaka.³⁰⁷ The arrow killed Panditaka and penetrated the ground. It was like a serpent that kills a man whose time has come. Remembering his earlier hardships, the one whose soul is not depressed then used three arrows to slice off Vishalaksha’s head and make it fall down on the ground. The great archer then struck Mahodara between the breasts with an iron arrow. O king! Pierced in the battle, he was slain and fell down on the ground. In the encounter, he sliced off Adityaketu’s

standard with an arrow. He used an extremely sharp and broad-headed arrow to slice off the enemy's head. The angry Bhima then used an arrow with a drooping tuft to despatch Bahvashi towards Yama's abode. O lord of the earth! Your other sons fled. They remembered the words that he had spoken in the assembly hall.³⁰⁸

“Because of his brothers, King Duryodhana was distressed. He spoke to all the warriors, ‘There is Bhima. Let him be killed in battle.’ O lord of the earth! Having been thus addressed, your sons, the great archers, saw that their brothers had been killed and remembered the beneficial words that the immensely wise Kshatta³⁰⁹ had spoken. The words of the one who could foresee were now coming true. O lord of men! You were overcome by avarice and confusion, because of affection towards your sons. In earlier times, you did not understand the purport of those great and beneficial words. Given the way the powerful Pandava is killing your sons, it seems that the mighty-armed one has been born for the sake of killing the Kouravas. O venerable one! King Duryodhana was overcome by great grief and distress. He went to Bhishma and began to lament. ‘My brave brothers have been killed by Bhimasena in battle. All the soldiers are fighting to the best of their capacity. But they are being killed. You seem to be neutral and are constantly disregarding us. I have chosen to traverse an evil path. Behold my destiny.’ On hearing Duryodhana's cruel words, your father, Devavrata's, eyes filled with tears and he spoke these words. ‘O son!³¹⁰ I uttered these words earlier, and so did Drona, Vidura and the illustrious Gandhari. But you did not understand. O destroyer of enemies! It was decided by me earlier that I will not escape from this battle with my life. Neither will the preceptor. I tell you truthfully that whichever son of Dhritarashtra Bhima sets his eyes on in this battle will be killed by him in the encounter. O king! Therefore, be patient. Be firm in your resolution to fight. Fight with the Parthas in this battle, setting your sights on heaven as the objective. No one is capable of vanquishing the Pandavas, the gods with Indra, or the asuras. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Therefore, fix your mind on the battle. Be patient and fight.’”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! On seeing that many of my sons are being killed by a single person, what did Bhishma, Drona and Kripa do in that battle? O Sanjaya! From one day to another, my sons are going to their perdition. O suta! I think that they have been completely overtaken by terrible destiny, since all my sons are being defeated and are never victorious. O son!³¹¹ My sons are in the midst of Bhishma, Drona, the great-souled Kripa, Somadatta’s valiant son, Bhagadatta, Ashvatthama and many other brave and extremely great-souled warriors. Yet they are being killed in the battle. Other than destiny, what can this be? The evil Duryodhana did not comprehend the words that I had spoken earlier. O son! He was restrained by me, and by Bhishma and Vidura. So did Gandhari, always desiring his welfare. But because of his delusion, the wicked one did not understand earlier and is now reaping the fruits. In this battle, the angry Bhimasena is killing and conveying my insensate sons to Yama’s abode.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “Kshatta’s supreme words were for your own welfare. They have now come true. O lord! You did not comprehend them then. Vidura had asked you to restrain your sons from the gambling match with the Pandavas and not oppress them. He is a well-wisher with your welfare in mind and spoke truthfully. But you did not heed his words, like a dying man who refuses good medicine. The words spoken by the virtuous have now come to be true. Vidura, Drona, Bhishma and other well-wishers spoke beneficial words that were not accepted and the Kouravas are headed towards destruction. O lord of the earth! All of this is the consequence of what transpired earlier. Now listen to the account of the battle, exactly as it unfolded. It was midday and an extremely great and terrible encounter commenced. O king! There was destruction of men. Listen, as I describe it. On the instructions of Dharma’s son, all the soldiers were enraged and attacked Bhishma, wishing to kill him. O great king! Dhrishtadyumna, Shikhandi, maharatha Satyaki, together with their armies, advanced against Bhishma. In that encounter, Arjuna, Droupadi’s

sons and Chekitana united and advanced against the kings who were following Duryodhana's command. The brave Abhimanyu, Hidimba's maharatha son and Bhimasena were enraged and attacked the Kouravas. The Pandavas divided themselves into three parts and fought against the Kouravas. O king! The Kouravas also began to kill the enemies in battle.

“Drona, best among rathas, angrily advanced against and fought with the Somakas and the Srinjayas, despatching them to Yama's eternal abode. O king! When they were slaughtered in battle by the archer who was Bharadvaja's son, a great lamentation arose among the great-souled Somakas. Drona killed many kshatriyas in that battle. They were seen to be unconscious, like men afflicted with disease. There were groans, moans and shrieks in that field of battle. There were continuous sounds, like those uttered by men overcome with hunger. The immensely strong and angry Bhimasena was like terrible death amidst the Kouraveyas and caused carnage. In that great battle, soldiers killed each other. A terrible river began to flow, with waves of blood. O great king! That battle between the Kurus and the Pandavas was great and assumed a terrible form. It extended Yama's kingdom. In particular, Bhima was incited with rage in that battle. He descended on the army of elephants and despatched them to the land of the dead. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Elephants were struck by Bhima's iron arrows. Some of them fell down. Others were paralysed. Others shrieked. Still others ran away in different directions. O venerable one! Great elephants had their trunks sliced off, their feet sliced off. Terrified, they shrieked like cranes. They fell down on the ground. Nakula and Sahadeva attacked the army of horses. The horses possessed golden harnesses. Their caparisons were made out of gold. They were seen to be slain in hundreds and thousands. O king! The earth was strewn with horses that had fallen down. Some lost their tongues. Others could not breathe. Still others shrieked in agony and lost their lives. O best of men! The earth was beautiful with horses of many different forms. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O lord of the earth! The earth looked resplendent, yet terrible, because in that encounter, Arjuna also killed many horses. O king! There were broken chariots, shattered standards, extremely dazzling

umbrellas, golden necklaces, bracelets, heads with earrings, loosened headdresses, pennants and the beautiful floors, yokes and reins of chariots everywhere. The earth was as beautiful as spring with its flowers. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The Pandus were also confronted with this kind of destruction when the angry Bhishma, Shantanu's son, Drona, supreme among rathas, Ashvatthama, Kripa and Kritavarma were enraged. And when those on the other side became angry, those on your side met with decay.”

CHAPTER 946(86)

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! When that terrible destruction of brave ones was going on, the illustrious Shakuni Soubala attacked the Pandavas. O king! Hardikya Satvata,³¹² the destroyer of enemy heroes, attacked the army of the Pandavas in that encounter. Pandava's brave powerful son, the scorcher of enemies, attacked your soldiers in a cheerful frame of mind. He possessed the foremost of speedy horses, the best of those from Kamboja and from the land of the rivers, those from Aratta, Mahi, Sindhu, white ones from Vanayu and others from mountainous regions. There were other swift ones of the Tittira breed, as fleet as the wind. They were armoured and ornamented in gold. They were trained well. This brave son of Arjuna was named Iravat. He was born from the intelligent Partha and was the son of the daughter of the king of the nagas. When her husband was slain by Suparna,³¹³ she was distressed and depressed in her mind. She was also childless and was bestowed by the great-souled Airavata.³¹⁴ She was overcome by the pangs of desire and Partha accepted her as his wife. Thus it was that Arjuna's son was born in another one's field.³¹⁵ Protected by his mother, he grew up in the world of the nagas. Because of his hatred for Partha, his evil-souled uncle abandoned him.³¹⁶ He was handsome and brave and possessed all the qualities. Truth was his valour. He quickly went to Indra's world when he heard that Arjuna had gone there. The one for whom truth was his valour, went to his great-souled father. He

anxiously bowed before him. Joining his hands in salutation, he humbly said, ‘O fortunate one! O lord! I am Iravat. I am your son.’ He told Pandava everything and reminded him of the circumstances about how he had met with his mother. He embraced his son, who was exactly like him in all the qualities. In the abode of the king of the gods, Partha was delighted. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The mighty-armed Arjuna then commanded him in the world of the gods and affectionately told him about his duty. ‘Come to us when it is the time for war.’ O lord! He agreed and went away. In accordance with those words, he presented himself, since the time for battle has come. O king! He was surrounded by many swift horses, with all the complexions that one desires. Those horses bore golden harnesses and were of many hues. They were as swift as thought. O king! They suddenly arrived and were like swans in the great ocean. They attacked the large numbers of your horses, which were also exceedingly fast. They struck each other on the chests and on the noses. O king! Those extremely swift horses suddenly fell down on the ground. Those masses of horses clashed against each other and were shattered and fell down. An extremely terrible sound was heard, like that when Suparna descends. O great king! Thus it was that they clashed against each other in the battle. The horse-riders fiercely began to kill each other. A tumultuous and fearful encounter raged. On both sides, large numbers of horses dashed around in all directions. The brave ones were mutilated with arrows. The horses were slain. They were overcome with exhaustion. They began to diminish in number, destroying each other with their swords.

“O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the armies of horses were whittled away and only a few were left, Soubala’s brave younger brothers rode out in the forefront of that battle. They were astride supreme horses that were like the touch of the wind in their speed. They were as fleet as the wind. They were well-trained and not too old or young. Those six were powerful—Gaja, Gavaksha, Vrishaka, Charmavat, Arjava and Shuka.³¹⁷ They advanced with a great army and were supported by Shakuni and their own extremely strong warriors. They were armoured and skilled in battle. They were terrible in form and extremely strong. O mighty-armed one!

With that extremely large army, desiring heaven and victory, they penetrated that supremely invincible army.³¹⁸ Unassailable in battle, those from Gandhara cheerfully entered there. On seeing that they had cheerfully penetrated, the valiant Iravat spoke to his own warriors, who were adorned with colourful ornaments and weapons in that battle. ‘Act according to the decreed policy, so that all the warriors of the sons of Dhritarashtra can be killed in this battle, together with their followers and their mounts.’ Agreeing, all of Iravat’s warriors began to slay the ranks of the enemy, though the enemy was invincible in battle. On witnessing that their ranks were being brought down in that battle, all of Subala’s sons could not tolerate this state of affairs in the encounter. All of them attacked and surrounded Iravat. They incited each other to attack him with sharp lances. The brave ones dashed around and created a great melee. The great-souled Iravat was pierced by those sharp lances. Blood began to flow from his body and he looked like an elephant wounded by a goad. He was severely wounded on his chest, his back and his sides. O king! He was alone and faced many. But he was not distressed and did not lose his fortitude. Iravat was enraged in that battle. The destroyer of enemy cities confounded all of them by piercing them with sharp arrows. The scorcher of enemies uprooted all the lances from his own body and used them to strike Subala’s sons in that battle. He unsheathed a sharp sword and grasped a shield. He swiftly advanced on foot, wishing to kill Subala’s sons in that encounter. Having regained their senses, all of Subala’s sons became angry and advanced against Iravat. But displaying the dexterity of his hands with the sword and proud of his strength, Iravat attacked all those sons of Subala. He roamed around with such great speed, that Subala’s sons, though they were on fleet horses, could not find an opportunity to strike him. However, in that battle, seeing him stationed on the ground again, all of them surrounded him at close quarters, wishing to capture him. The destroyer of enemies saw that they were near him. He used his sword to slice off their right hands and their left and mutilated other parts of their bodies. All their arms were adorned with various ornaments. They were seen to fall down. They too, without their limbs, fell

down on the ground, devoid of their lives. O great king! In that extremely terrible battle where brave warriors were slaughtered, only Vrishaka escaped, though he was severely wounded.³¹⁹

“On seeing that all of them had fallen down, Duryodhana was frightened. He spoke to the extremely terrible rakshasa who was terrible in form. The scorcher of enemies was a great archer and was skilled in maya. He was the son of Rishyashringa.³²⁰ He had earlier become an enemy of Bhimasena on account of the slaying of Baka.³²¹ ‘O brave one! Witness the strength of Phalguna’s son. He is skilled in maya and has caused the unpleasant and terrible destruction of my forces. O son!³²² You are capable of going anywhere at will. You are skilled in the use of weapons of maya. You are the sworn enemy of Partha. Therefore, kill him in battle.’ The rakshasa, terrible in form, agreed to these words. He roared like a lion and advanced to where Arjuna’s young son was. He was surrounded by his own soldiers, who were brave and armed. They were accomplished in fighting, were astride mounts and were armed with polished lances. He wished to kill the immensely powerful Iravat in battle. The valiant and swift Iravat was enraged. The slayer of enemies countered the rakshasa who was seeking his death. On seeing that he was descending on him, the extremely powerful rakshasa swiftly resorted to his powers of maya. He created a large number of illusory horses. They were ridden by terrible rakshasas, who wielded spears and javelins. Two thousand of these armed ones angrily advanced. The two sides clashed and quickly sent each other to the land of the dead. When the soldiers on both sides had been killed, the two of them, invincible in battle, attacked each other in that encounter, like Vritra against Vasava. On seeing the rakshasa, invincible in battle, advance against him, the extremely strong Iravat was enraged and attacked him. When the evil-minded one approached close, he used his sword to slice off his blazing sword and shattered his shield into five parts. On seeing that the bow had been severed, he quickly resorted to the sky and angrily confounded Iravat with his maya. But Iravat also rose up into the sky and confounded the rakshasa with his own maya. He was invincible

too and could assume any form at will. He knew about the body's inner organs and pierced his body with his arrows. O great king! The foremost among rakshasas was repeatedly wounded through these arrows, but he became hale again and regained his youth. Maya is natural to them, and according to their wishes, so are energy, age and beauty. Thus, though the rakshasa's limbs were repeatedly mangled, they healed. Iravat used his sharp battle axe to repeatedly slice angrily at the immensely strong rakshasa. That brave and powerful rakshasa was repeatedly sliced like a tree and roared terribly, making a tumultuous sound. Wounded by the battleaxe, the rakshasa began to profusely shed blood. The powerful one became enraged and continued to battle forcefully. On seeing that the enemy was so energetic in the battle, Rishyashringa's son assumed an extremely terrible and gigantic form. While everyone looked on, he tried to grasp him in the forefront of that battle. But seeing this maya employed by the great-souled rakshasa, Iravat angrily created his own maya. He was overcome by anger and he was one who never retreated from battle. O king! His mother's relatives approached him and he was surrounded by many nagas in that battle, assuming a great form like Bhogavat.³²³ The rakshasa was enveloped by many kinds of nagas. Enveloped by those nagas, that bull among rakshasas thought and assumed the form of Suparna,³²⁴ so that he could devour the nagas. On seeing that his mother's relatives were devoured through maya, Iravat was confused. And the rakshasa killed him with his sword. Iravat's head was adorned with earrings and a diadem and was as radiant as a lotus or the moon. The rakshasa made it fall down on the ground.

““On seeing that Arjuna's brave son had been slain by the rakshasa, the sons of Dhritarashtra, together with the kings, became free from sorrow. The great and terrible battle commenced again. The armies attacked each other and the carnage was great and terrible. Horses, elephants and infantry became mixed with each other and were killed by tuskers. Chariot-riders and elephants were also killed by foot soldiers. O king! Rathas, on your side and on theirs, killed masses of infantry and chariot-

riders and many horses in that encounter. Arjuna did not know that his son had been killed and in that battle, slew many kings who were protecting Bhishma. O king! The immensely strong ones, on your side and on that of the Srinjayas, fought each other in that battle, offering their lives as oblations. Their hair was dishevelled. They were without armour. They were without chariots and their bows had been severed. But they confronted each other and fought with their bare arms. The immensely strong Bhishma killed many maharathas with arrows that penetrated the innards and made the soldiers of the Pandavas tremble. He killed many men in Yudhishtira's army, and many elephants, horse-riders, chariot-riders and horses. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On witnessing Bhishma's valour in that battle, we thought that it was as extraordinary as Shakra's valour. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bhimasena and Parshata were also like that. The battle fought by the Satvata archer³²⁵ was also terrible. On witnessing Drona's valour, the Pandavas were overcome by fear. They thought that he was alone capable of killing all the soldiers in battle, not to speak of a situation where he was surrounded by warriors whose bravery was famous on earth. O great king! Oppressed by Drona in that battle, they spoke in this fashion. O bull among the Bharata lineage! While that terrible encounter continued between the two armies, the brave ones did not pardon each other. Those immensely strong ones were engrossed in that battle, as if they were overcome by rakshasas and demons. The archers on your side, and those of the Pandaveyas, were enraged. We did not see anyone seeking to protect his life. O lord of men! It was a battle like that of warriors from among the daityas themselves.”

CHAPTER 947(87)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! On seeing that Iravat had been killed in the battle, what did the maharatha Parthas do?”

‘Sanjaya said, “On seeing that Iravat had been killed in the battle, Bhimasena's son, the rakshasa Ghatotkacha, let out a loud roar. O king! At the sound of this roar, the earth, up to the frontiers of the ocean, with its

mountains and forests, seemed to tremble violently. So did the sky, the directions and all the sub-directions. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing this extremely loud roar, the thighs and other limbs of all your soldiers began to tremble. They quaked and began to sweat. O Indra among kings! All those on your side became dispirited. They seemed to be in the coils of a snake and were like elephants frightened of a lion. The rakshasa let out that extremely loud roar. He raised a flaming spear and assumed a terrible form. He was surrounded by terrible bulls among rakshasas, wielding many weapons. They advanced in great anger, like Yama at the destruction of an yuga. On witnessing him advance, in anger and with a terrible form and beholding that his own soldiers were frightened and were running away, King Duryodhana attacked Ghatotkacha. He grasped a large bow and repeatedly roared like a lion. The lord of Vanga himself followed him at the back, with ten thousand elephants that were like mountains and were exuding musth. O great king! On seeing that your son was advancing, surrounded by an army of elephants, the traveller of the night³²⁶ became angry. O Indra among kings! A tumultuous battle commenced between the rakshasa and Duryodhana's soldiers and it made the body hair stand up. That army of elephants was like a mass of clouds, charged with lightning. On beholding it advance, the angry rakshasas grasped weapons in their hands. They roared in many different ways, like thundering clouds full of lightning. They began to strike down the elephant-riders with arrows, javelins, swords, iron arrows, catapults, spears and battleaxes. They killed the mighty elephants with the peaks of mountains and trees. Their temples were shattered. Blood began to flow from the mangled bodies of the elephants. O great king! We saw that they were killed by those travellers of the night. The warriors on elephants were scattered. O great king! On seeing this, Duryodhana attacked the rakshasas. He was overcome by intolerance and gave up all desire to protect his own life. The immensely strong one released arrows towards the rakshasas. The great archer slew the foremost among the rakshasas. O best of the Bharata lineage! Your son, Duryodhana, was angry. The maharatha used four arrows to kill four

of them—Vegavat, Maharoudra, Vidyutjihva and Pramathi. O best of the Bharata lineage! The one whose soul is immeasurable showered down arrows that were irresistible, towards that army of travellers in the night. O venerable one! On seeing that great deed of your son, Bhimasena's extremely strong son blazed forth in anger. He twanged his great bow, with a sound like that of Indra's vajra. The scorcher of enemies forcefully attacked Duryodhana. O great king! On seeing him advance, like Death urged on by the Destroyer, your son, Duryodhana, was not distressed. The cruel one³²⁷ angrily spoke to him, his eyes red with rage. 'It is because of your great cruelty that they were exiled for a long time. O king! You defeated the Pandavas in a deceitful game of dice. O one with evil intelligence! It was because of this that Droupadi Krishna was brought to the assembly hall, though she was in her menses and was clad in a single garment. You caused her hardship in many ways. While they dwelt in the hermitage, it was to bring you pleasure that the evil-souled Saindhava tormented her, disrespecting my fathers. O worst of your lineage! Because of this and many other insults, I will bring about your end today, if you do not flee from the field of battle.' Having said this, Hidimba's son drew his gigantic bow. He bit his lip³²⁸ and licked the corners of his mouth. He covered Duryodhana with a great shower of arrows, like the slayer of Bala³²⁹ bringing down a shower of rain on a mountain during the monsoon.'"

CHAPTER 948(88)

'Sanjaya said, "That shower of arrows was difficult to withstand, even by the danavas. But that Indra among kings withstood it in battle, like a giant elephant bearing rain. Overcome with rage, he sighed like a serpent. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Your son confronted a supreme danger. He released twenty-five extremely sharp iron arrows. O king! They suddenly descended on that bull among rakshasas, like angry and violent serpents on Mount Gandhamadana. He was pierced by them and blood began to flow. He was like an elephant with a shattered temple. The man-eater then made

up his mind to destroy the king. He grasped a giant javelin that was capable of shattering a mountain. It blazed like a giant meteor and was like Maghavan's vajra. The mighty-armed one raised it, wishing to kill your son. The lord of Vanga was astride an elephant that was like a mountain.³³⁰ On seeing it raised, he swiftly advanced towards the rakshasa. That supreme of elephants was powerful and was extremely fast. He reached the path where Duryodhana's chariot was stationed and protected your son's chariot with the elephant. O great king! On seeing that the path had been restricted by the intelligent king of Vanga, Ghatotkacha's eyes became red with rage. He raised a giant javelin and hurled it towards the elephant. O king! When it was hurled from his arms, the elephant was struck. It was covered with blood and hurt grievously, fell down and died. When the elephant fell down, the powerful lord of Vanga quickly jumped down and resorted to the ground.

“Duryodhana saw that the supreme of elephants had fallen down and that his soldiers were scattered. He was gravely distressed. He held the dharma of kshatriyas to be of paramount importance and was also proud of his own self. Though he had been defeated, the king remained as immobile as a mountain. He affixed a sharp arrow that was like the fire at the time of destruction and in great rage, unleashed it at the terrible traveller of the night. The arrow was as radiant as Indra's vajra. On seeing it descend, the gigantic Ghatotkacha avoided it through his dexterity of movement. He roared terribly again, his eyes red with anger. This frightened all beings, like clouds at the end of a yuga. On hearing the fearful roar of the terrible rakshasa, Bhishma, Shantanu's son, went to the preceptor and said, 'I have heard the terrible roar emitted by the rakshasa. I have no doubt that Hidimba's son is fighting with King Duryodhana. No being is capable of vanquishing him in battle. O fortunate one! Therefore, go there and protect the king. The immensely fortunate one has been attacked by the evil-souled rakshasa. O scorchers of enemies!³³¹ This is the supreme duty for all of us now.' On hearing the words of the grandfather, the maharathas used the utmost speed to quickly go to the spot where Kourava was—

Drona, Somadatta, Bahlika, Jayadratha, Kripa, Bhurishrava, Shalya, Chitrasena, Vivimshati, Ashvatthama, Vikarna, the one from Avanti³³² and Brihadbala. Many thousand rathas followed them. They advanced to rescue Duryodhana, your son, who was oppressed. That invincible army was protected by the best in the worlds. The supreme of rakshasas saw that it was advancing to kill him. However, like Mount Mainaka, the mighty-armed one did not tremble at all. Surrounded by his relatives, he grasped a giant bow. With spears, clubs, bare hands and many kinds of weapons, a tumultuous battle commenced and it made the body hair stand up. The rakshasas were on one side and the foremost of Duryodhana's soldiers on the other. O great king! The tremendous sound of bows being twanged could be heard everywhere, as if bamboos were being burned. Weapons descended on bodies protected by armour. O king! That sound was like that of mountains being shattered. O lord of the earth! Javelins were hurled from the arms of brave ones and as they travelled through the sky, they looked like snakes. The Indra among rakshasas became extremely angry. The mighty-armed one drew his extremely large bow and let out a terrible roar. In anger, he used an arrow in the shape of a half-moon to slice down the preceptor's bow. He roared and used a broad-headed arrow to bring down Somadatta's standard. He used three arrows to pierce Bahlika between the breasts. He pierced Kripa with one arrow and Chitrasena with three. He drew his bow to the full extent and used a well-aimed arrow to strike Vikarna in the joint of his shoulders. Covered in blood, he sank down on the floor of his chariot. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The one whose soul was immeasurable was wrathful. He despatched fifteen iron arrows in the form of half-moons towards Bhurishrava. These swiftly penetrated his armour and penetrated the ground. He next struck Vivimshati and Drona's charioteers. They fell down on the floors of their chariots, giving up the reins of their horses. The standard of the king of Sindhu bore the mark of a boar and was decorated with gold. O great king! He uprooted that with an arrow in the shape of a half-moon and used another to sever his bow. The great-souled one's eyes were red with rage. He used four iron arrows to slay the four horses of Avanti. O great king!

He stretched his bow back to the fullest extent and used a yellow and sharp arrow to pierce Prince Brihadbala. Gravely pierced and wounded, he sank down on the floor of the chariot. The lord of the rakshasas was full of great rage and was stationed on his chariot. He shot many arrows that were sharp at the tip and were like venomous serpents. O great king! Though Shalya was skilled in battle, they pierced him.””

CHAPTER 949(89)

‘Sanjaya said, “In that battle, the rakshasa made all those on your side retreat from battle. O best of the Bharata lineage! He then rushed at Duryodhana, wishing to kill him. On seeing him forcefully descend on the king, many on your side, unassailable in battle, attacked him, wishing to kill him. Those immensely strong ones twanged bows that were as long as palm trees. They roared like a group of lions and together, attacked the one who was alone. They surrounded him from every direction and showered down arrows. It was like the slayer of Bala showering rain on mountains during the autumn. He was severely pierced and wounded, like an elephant with a goad. He quickly rose up into the sky, like Vinata’s son.³³³ Stationed there, he uttered mighty roars, like clouds during the autumn. His terrible roars echoed in the sky, the directions and the sub-directions. O best of the Bharata lineage! On hearing the sounds emitted by the rakshasa, King Yudhishtira spoke these words to Bhimasena. ‘The rakshasa is certainly fighting with the maharatha sons of Dhritarashtra. That is the reason we are hearing the sounds of these terrible roars. O son!³³⁴ I see that the burden he has taken on is too much. The angry grandfather is ready to kill the Panchalas. For the sake of protecting them, Phalgunas is fighting with the enemy. O mighty-armed one! Two tasks now present themselves.³³⁵ Having heard this, go and protect Hidimba’s son. He confronts a great danger.’ Obeying the words of his brother, Vrikodara swiftly advanced. He roared like a lion, frightening all the kings. O king! He proceeded with great force, like the ocean at the time of the new moon or the full moon. He was followed by Satyadhriti and Souchitti, invincible

in battle, Shrenimat, Vasudana and the lord who was the son of the king of Kashi. There were many other maharathas, with Abhimanyu at the forefront, Droupadi's sons, the valiant Kshatradeva, Kshatradharma and Nila, the lord of the marshy regions, together with his own soldiers. They surrounded Hidimba's son with a large number of chariots. There were six thousand elephants that were always crazy, with riders prepared to strike. They advanced to protect Ghatotkacha, Indra among the rakshasas. They roared like lions. There was a great sound from the wheels of the chariots. There was a roar from the sound of the hooves. The earth began to tremble. On hearing the sounds of those advancing ones, the faces of your soldiers paled. They were anxious because of their fear of Bhimasena. O great king! They abandoned Ghatotkacha and fled from the field of battle.

“A battle then commenced between the great-souled ones on your side and those of the enemy. Neither side wished to retreat from the encounter. The maharathas used many different kinds of weapons. They attacked each other and struck each other. That extremely terrible battle struck terror in the minds of those who were cowards. Horse-riders encountered elephant-riders, infantry clashed with chariot-riders. O king! In that encounter, they challenged each other and attacked each other. Because of that clash, a terrible and great dust arose, from chariots, horses, elephants, infantry, footsteps and wheels. That dust was thick, like red smoke, and covered the arena of the battle. O king! It was impossible to distinguish those on one's own side from those of the enemy. The father did not recognize the son. The son did not recognize the father. No mercy was shown in the encounter and it made the body hair stand up. O best of the Bharata lineage! There was the sound of weapons and the roar of men. There was an extremely large din, like that of bamboos being burnt. A river of blood began to flow there and the waves were elephants, horses and men. The hair³³⁶ constituted the weeds and moss. The heads and bodies of men fell down in that battle and a great sound was heard, like that of stones falling down. The earth was strewn with the torsos of men, the mangled bodies of elephants and the mutilated bodies of horses. The maharathas released many different kinds of weapons. They attacked each other and struck

each other. Urged by horse-riders, horses clashed against horses. In that battle, they dashed against each other and fell down, devoid of life. Men attacked men, their eyes extremely red with rage. They struck each other with their chests and thus killed each other. Urged by the trainers, elephants attacked the elephants of the enemy. And in that encounter, they slew the others with the points of their tusks. They were adorned with pennants and were covered in blood. In that clash, they looked like clouds tinged with lightning. Some had their trunks sliced into two. Others had their bodies lacerated. They fell down in that tumult, like mountains with their wings sliced off.³³⁷ Some supreme elephants had their sides ripped open by other elephants. They shed large quantities of blood, like mountains exuding minerals. Some were slain through iron arrows, others were pierced by javelins. Without their riders, they were seen to be like mountains without summits. Some of them were blind with anger and madness. No longer controlled, they crushed hundreds of chariots, horses and infantry in that encounter. Horse-riders pierced horses with spears and javelins. They rushed against each other, confused about the directions. Rathas born in noble lineages fought with other rathas, ready to give up their bodies. They resorted to the best of their strength and acted without any fear. O king! Those skilled in battle sought fame, or heaven, and fought each other, as if in a svayamvara. Thus the battle raged there, and it made the body hair stand up. The great army of the sons of Dhritarashtra were generally made to retreat.”

CHAPTER 950(90)

‘Sanjaya said, “On seeing that his own soldiers had been killed, King Duryodhana angrily attacked Bhimasena, the destroyer of enemies. He grasped a giant bow, which had a sound like that of Indra’s vajra. He covered Pandava with a great shower of arrows. He was full of rage. He affixed an extremely sharp arrow that was in the shape of a half-moon and was tufted with hair. He sliced down Bhimasena’s bow with this. Thereafter, the maharatha saw an opportunity. He affixed an extremely

sharp arrow that was capable of shattering a mountain. With this, the mighty-armed one struck Bhimasena in the chest. He was severely pierced and wounded and licked the corners of his mouth. The energetic one sought the support of his standard, which was decorated with gold. On seeing Bhimasena in that dispirited state, Ghatotkacha blazed up in anger, like a fire that can consume everything. With Abhimanyu at the forefront, all the maharatha Pandavas dashed angrily towards the king, roaring loudly. On seeing them advance, in fury and rage, Bharadvaja's son spoke these words to the maharathas on your side. 'O fortunate ones! Go swiftly and protect the king. I think he confronts a great danger and is submerged in an ocean of distress. These maharatha Pandavas are great archers and are angry. With Bhimasena at the forefront, they are attacking Duryodhana. With victory in mind, they are using many different kinds of weapons. They are uttering terrible roars and are terrifying the kings.'³³⁸ On hearing the words of the preceptor, with Somadatta at the forefront, many on your side attacked the army of the Pandavas—Kripa, Bhurishrava, Shalya, Drona's son, Vivimshati, Chitrasena, Vikarna, Saindhava, Brihadbala and the two great archers from Avanti. They surrounded Kourava. They advanced only twenty steps and began to strike each other. The Pandavas and the sons of Dhritrashtra sought to kill each other.

“Having spoken those words, Bharadvaja's mighty-armed son stretched his own gigantic bow and pierced Bhima with twenty-six arrows. Yet again, the mighty-armed one quickly enveloped him with arrows. It was like the slayer of Bala showering rain on a mountain during autumn. However, Bhimasena was extremely strong. The great archer swiftly pierced him back on the left side with ten arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He was severely pierced and wounded. He was also elderly in years. He became unconscious and suddenly sat down on the floor of his chariot. On seeing that the preceptor was wounded, King Duryodhana himself, and Drona's son, became angry and attacked Bhimasena. Each of them was like Yama at the end of a yuga. On seeing them advance, the mighty-armed Bhimasena quickly grasped a club. He

instantly descended from his chariot and stood, as immobile as a mountain. That heavy club looked like Yama's staff, raised in battle. On seeing him with the upraised club, like the summit of Kailasa, Kourava and Drona's son rushed at him, together. Vrikodara also swiftly rushed at those supreme among strong ones, as they forcefully advanced against him. On seeing him advance in rage, terrible in his visage, many Kourava maharathas quickly attacked him. With Bharadvaja's son³³⁹ at the forefront, all of them wished to kill Bhimasena. They hurled many different kinds of weapons towards Bhima's chest. Together, all of them oppressed Pandava from every direction. On beholding that the maharatha was oppressed and faced a great danger, Abhimanyu and the other Pandava maharathas advanced to rescue him, ready to give up their lives. The brave lord of the marshy regions was Bhima's beloved friend. Nila possessed a complexion that was blue like the clouds and in anger, he attacked Drona's son. The great archer had always sought to challenge Drona's son. He drew his large bow and pierced Drona's son with arrows. O great king! It was like Shakra piercing the invincible danava Viprachitti, who was the terror of the gods, in earlier times. Through his anger and energy, he had terrified the three worlds. In that way, Nila pierced him with arrows that were well-tipped.³⁴⁰ Drona's son was wounded and covered with blood and overcome with rage. He drew his colourful bow, with a roar like that of Indra's vajra. The supreme among intelligent ones made up his mind to destroy Nila. He affixed polished and broad-headed arrows that had been crafted by a blacksmith and slew his³⁴¹ four horses and brought down his standard. With a seventh broad-headed arrow, he pierced Nila in the breast.³⁴² He was severely pierced and wounded and sat down on his chariot.

“King Nila possessed the complexion of the clouds. On seeing that he was unconscious, Ghatotkacha became angry. Surrounded by his brothers, he impetuously rushed towards Drona's son, who was the ornament of any battle. In that fashion, many other rakshasas, invincible in battle, also advanced. On seeing that rakshasa, terrible in form, advance towards him,

Bharadvaja's spirited son became angry and killed many rakshasas, who were terrible in form, especially those enraged rakshasas who were leading from the front. On seeing that they were repulsed as a consequence of the arrows released from the bow of Drona's son, Ghatotkacha, Bhimasena's son who was gigantic in size, became angry. He resorted to great maya that was fearful in form and extremely terrible. In that encounter, the lord of the rakshasas, skilled in the use of maya, confounded Drona's son. Because of that maya, all those on your side retreated. They saw each other lying down immobile on the face of the ground, writhing in convulsions, miserable and covered in blood. Drona, Duryodhana, Shalya, Ashvatthama and the other great archers who were generally regarded as the foremost among the Kouravas were also in that state. All the chariots seemed to be shattered, the elephants brought down. Horses and horse-riders were cut down in thousands.³⁴³ On seeing this, all the soldiers on our side fled towards their camps. O king! I³⁴⁴ and Devavrata shouted, 'Fight. Do not run away. This is the maya of rakshasas in battle. It has been applied by Ghatotkacha.' But they were confounded and did not stay. Though both of us shouted in this way, they were frightened and did not pay attention to our words. On seeing that they were running away, the Pandavas thought that they were victorious. Together with Ghatotkacha, they roared like lions. The roars and the sounds of conch shells and drums resounded in every direction. Thus all your soldiers were routed by Hidimba's evil-souled son and fled in different directions. It was time for the sun to set.”

CHAPTER 951(91)

‘Sanjaya said, “After that mighty battle, King Duryodhana went to Gangeya. He honoured him and in humility, told him everything exactly as it had happened, about Ghatotkacha's victory and about his own defeat.³⁴⁵ O king! While narrating, the invincible one sighed repeatedly. He then spoke these words to Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus. ‘O lord! We sought refuge with you, just as the enemy resorted to Vasudeva, and we embarked on this terrible conflict with the Pandavas. I possess eleven

illustrious akshouhinis. O scorcher of enemies! They are with me and follow your command. O tiger among the Bharata lineage! But I have been defeated by the Pandava warriors, led by Bhimasena. They have resorted to Ghatotkacha. My body is burning, like a dry tree being consumed by a fire. O immensely fortunate one! O scorcher of enemies! I desire your favours. O grandfather! I wish to kill that outcast among rakshasas myself.’ O supreme among the Bharata lineage! On hearing these words of the king, Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, spoke these words to Duryodhana. ‘O king! O Kourava! Listen to the words that I am speaking to you. O great king! O scorcher of enemies! This is about how you should conduct yourself. O son!³⁴⁶ O destroyer of enemies! One’s own self must always be protected in battle, in every situation. O unblemished one! It is your duty to fight with Dharmaraja, Arjuna, the twins and Bhimasena. Upholding the dharma of a king, a king must strike at a king. I, Drona, Kripa, Drona’s son, Satvata Kritavarma, Shalya, Somadatta’s son, maharatha Vikarna and your brave brothers, with Duhshasana at the forefront, will fight against the immensely strong rakshasa for your sake. However, if your hatred for that terrible Indra among the rakshasas is great, let King Bhagadatta advance in battle and fight against the evil-minded one. He is Purandara’s equal in battle.’ Having said this, in the presence of the king, the one who was eloquent with words, spoke these words to King Bhagadatta. ‘O great king! Swiftly advance against Hidimba’s son, who is invincible in battle. While all these archers look on, take care and counter the rakshasa, evil in deeds, in the battle, just as Indra resisted Taraka in ancient times.³⁴⁷ O scorcher of enemies! Your weapons are celestial and so is your valour. In earlier times, you have had many encounters with asuras. O tiger among kings! In this great battle, you will be able to resist him. O king! Surrounded by your own soldiers, you will be able to vanquish the bull among the rakshasas.’ On hearing Bhishma’s words, the leader of an army roared like a lion and swiftly advanced towards the enemy.

“O venerable one! On seeing him advance, roaring like a cloud, the Pandava maharathas became enraged and dashed towards him— Bhimasena, Abhimanyu, the rakshasa Ghatotkacha, Droupadi’s sons, Satyadhriti, Kshatradeva, the lord of Chedi, Vasudana and the lord of Dasharna. Bhagadatta advanced against them on Supratika.³⁴⁸ A terrible and fearful encounter started between the Pandus and Bhagadatta and it extended Yama’s kingdom. The rathas released extremely energetic arrows, fierce in their speed. O great king! These descended on the elephants and the chariots. They shattered the great elephants that were urged by the elephant-riders. They clashed and fell against each other, without any fear. They were blind with madness and overcome with rage and in that great battle, attacked each other with the tips of tusks that looked like clubs. They gored each other with these. The horses possessed bushy tails and their riders had lances in their hands. Goaded by the riders, they swiftly attacked each other. Foot soldiers attacked foot soldiers with spears and javelins. Hundreds and thousands fell down on the ground. O king! In that encounter, brave rathas used barbed and hollow arrows and slew each other, roaring like lions. The battle raged and it made the body hair stand up. The great archer, Bhagadatta, attacked Bhimasena on an elephant with shattered temples, with musth strewing down in seven streams. It was like a mountain with rainwater flowing down from it in every direction. O unblemished one! He was stationed on Supratika’s head and showered down thousands of arrows, like Maghavan showering rain from Airavata. The king tormented Bhima with that shower of arrows, like the slayer of Bala showering down rain on a mountain during the monsoon. Bhimasena became angry. Enraged, the great archer showered down arrows and slew more than one hundred soldiers who were protecting his³⁴⁹ feet. On seeing that they had been slain, the powerful Bhagadatta became angry. He urged that Indra among elephants towards Bhimasena’s chariot. Thus urged, the elephant advanced forcefully towards Bhimasena, the scorcher of enemies, like an arrow released from the string of a bow. On witnessing it advance, the Pandava maharathas,

with Bhimasena at the forefront, impetuously advanced towards it. O venerable one! They were those from Kekaya, Abhimanyu, all of Droupadi's sons, the lord of Dasharna, the brave Kshatradeva, the lord of Chedi and Chitraketu. All of them were angry. These immensely strong ones exhibited their supreme and divine weapons. They angrily surrounded the elephant from every direction. Pierced by many arrows, that giant elephant was covered with blood from its wounds and looked like a colourful king of mountains with minerals flowing from it.

“The lord of Dasharna was on an elephant that looked like a mountain. Stationed on that, he attacked Bhagadatta's elephant. But in that encounter, Supratika, the king of elephants withstood the advancing elephant, like the shoreline counters the ocean. On seeing that the great-souled Dasharna's king of elephants was repulsed, even the Pandava soldiers applauded. O supreme among kings! Pragjyotisha then angrily hurled fourteen javelins towards the elephant. These swiftly penetrated the excellent armour, embellished with gold, and shattered it, like serpents entering a termite hill. O supreme among the Bharata lineage! Severely pierced and wounded, the elephant quickly and forcefully retreated, its craziness pacified. It fled with great speed, uttering loud shrieks and crushing its own ranks, like a violent storm amidst trees. When that elephant was vanquished, the Pandava maharathas roared like lions and advanced to do battle. With Bhima leading, they attacked Bhagadatta. They released many kinds of arrows and used different kinds of weapons. O king! They were angry and intolerant. On seeing them advance and on hearing their terrible roars, Bhagadatta, the great archer, angrily and fearlessly urged his own elephant. That supreme of elephants was urged by the goad and the toe. It assumed the form of the fire of destruction.³⁵⁰ It crushed a large number of chariots, elephants and horses, together with their riders. It angrily crushed hundreds and thousands of foot soldiers. O king! It began to rampage around everywhere in that battle. O great king! Agitated, that large army of the Pandus seemed to diminish, like leather that is exposed to the fire.

“On seeing that his own ranks were scattered by the intelligent Bhagadatta, Ghatotkacha became angry and attacked Bhagadatta. O king! His visage was gruesome, harsh and flaming. His eyes burnt. Burning with rage, he assumed a terrible form. He grasped a giant spear that was capable of shattering a mountain. The immensely strong one hurled it forcefully, wishing to kill the elephant. It was surrounded by sparks of flaming fire in every direction. On seeing it forcefully descend towards him in that battle, flaming away, the king sliced it down with a beautiful arrow that was in the shape of a half-moon. He severed that extremely large spear with a powerful arrow. Divided into two and dislodged, the spear, decorated with gold, fell down on the ground. It was like the great vajra, released by Shakra and coursing through the sky. On seeing that the spear had been severed into two and brought down, the king grasped a mighty javelin with a golden handle. It was like the flame of a fire. Asking the rakshasa to wait, he hurled it at him. On seeing it descend towards him from the sky, like lightning, the rakshasa roared. He leapt up and grasped it quickly. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! While all the lords of the earth looked on, he placed it on his thighs and broke it. It was extraordinary. Having witnessed this deed accomplished by the powerful rakshasa, the gods in heaven, together with the gandharvas and the sages, were astounded. With Bhimasena at the forefront, the great archers among the Pandavas made the earth resound with their roars of applause.

“However, the powerful Bhagadatta, the great archer, could not bear to hear the roars of delight uttered by those great-souled ones. He stretched his great bow, which had a sound like that of Indra’s vajra. He quickly attacked the maharatha Pandavas. He shot many polished and sharp iron arrows that were as radiant as the fire. He pierced Bhima with one arrow and the rakshasa with nine, Abhimanyu with three and the Kekayas with five. In that battle, he stretched his bow back to its full extent and used a gold-tufted arrow to pierce Kshatradeva’s right arm, so that his supreme bow, with the arrow affixed to it, fell down on the ground. He struck Droupadi’s five sons with five. He angrily killed Bhimasena’s horses and used three arrows to bring down his standard, bearing the mark of a lion.

With three other arrows, he pierced his charioteer. O best of the Bharata lineage! Severely pierced and wounded by Bhagadatta in that battle, Vishoka sank down on the floor of the chariot. O great king! Bereft of his chariot, Bhima, supreme among rathas, quickly leapt down from his large chariot and grasped a club. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing him with the upraised club, like a mountain with a summit, all those on your side were overcome with terrible fear. At this time, Pandava, with Krishna as his charioteer, arrived, slaughtering the enemy in thousands. Those tigers among men, scorchers of enemies, father and son, Bhimasena and Ghatotkacha, were fighting with Pragjyotisha there. O king! O best of the Bharata lineage! On seeing that the maharathas were fighting there, Pandava quickly began to shower down arrows. Maharatha King Duryodhana swiftly urged his soldiers, full of chariots, elephants and horses. As that great army of the Kouravas forcefully advanced, Pandava, borne on white steeds, powerfully countered them. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Mounted on his elephant in that encounter, Bhagadatta scattered the Pandava army and advanced towards Yudhishtira. O venerable one! A tumultuous battle commenced between Bhagadatta and the Panchalas, Srinjayas and Kekayas, with the warriors raising their weapons. In the course of that battle, Bhimasena told Keshava and Arjuna the detailed account of how Iravat had been killed, exactly as it had occurred.””

CHAPTER 952(92)

‘Sanjaya said, “On hearing that his son Iravat had been killed, Dhananjaya was overcome by great grief. He sighed like a serpent. O king! In that battle, he spoke these words to Vasudeva. ‘There is no doubt that the immensely wise Vidura had foreseen all this earlier. The one with great intelligence had known about the terrible destruction of the Kurus and the Pandavas. It was for this reason that he tried to restrain Dhritarashtra, the lord of men. O Madhusudana! Many brave ones who cannot be slain have been killed by the Kouravas in this battle. We have also killed those on their side. O best of men! Evil acts are being perpetrated for the sake of

artha. Shame on artha. For its sake, this slaughter of kin is being perpetrated. For one who possesses no wealth, death is preferable to this acquisition of wealth through the slaughter of relatives. O Krishna! What will we gain by killing these assembled relatives? Because of Duryodhana's crimes, and those of Shakuni Soubala, and because of Karna's evil counsel, all the kshatriyas are headed towards destruction. O Madhusudana! O mighty-armed one! I now understand the king's wise act, when he sought only half the kingdom from Suyodhana, or only five villages. But the evil-minded one did not grant it. On seeing so many brave kshatriyas lying down on the ground, I censure myself severely. Shame on the livelihood of kshatriyas. In this battle, the kshatriyas will know me as incapable. O Madhusudana! I no longer derive pleasure from this battle with relatives. However, swiftly drive the horses towards the army of the sons of Dhritarashtra. With my two arms, I will cross the ocean that this battle is, one that is difficult to cross. O Madhava! This is not the time to act like a eunuch.' Thus addressed by Partha, Keshava, the destroyer of enemy heroes, urged those white horses, which were as fleet as the wind. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! A great roar arose amidst your soldiers. It was like the ocean at the time of the new moon or the full moon, agitated by the force of the wind.

“O great king! It was afternoon and a battle commenced between Bhishma and the Pandavas, with a roar like that of the clouds. O king! In that encounter, your sons surrounded Drona, like the Vasus around Vasava, and attacked Bhimasena. Bhishma, Shantanu's son, Kripa, supreme among rathas, Bhagadatta and Susharma attacked Dhananjaya. Hardikya and Bahlika attacked Satyaki. King Ambashtha countered Abhimanyu. O great king! Others who were left encountered other maharathas. A terrible battle that was fearful in form commenced. O lord of men! On seeing Bhimasena, your son blazed in that battle, like oblations being poured onto a sacrificial fire. At that time, your sons covered Kounteya with arrows. O great king! It was like monsoon clouds pouring down on mountains. O lord of men! He was thus enveloped by your sons in many ways and licked the corners of his mouth. The brave one was as proud as a tiger. O king!

Bhima brought down Vyudoraska with an extremely sharp and broad-headed arrow and he was deprived of his life. With another sharp, yellow and broad-headed arrow, he brought down Kundalina, like a lion bringing down a small animal.³⁵¹ O venerable one! Having approached your sons, he swiftly took up seven extremely sharp and yellow arrows. Firm in wielding the bow, Bhimasena despatched these arrows and brought down your sons, extremely great maharathas, from their chariots. These were Anadhrishti, Kundabheda, Vairata, Dirghalochana, Dirghabahu, Subahu and Kanakadhvaja. O bull among the Bharata lineage! As they fell down, these brave ones were radiant, like blossoming and dappled trees that fall down during the spring. O lord of the earth! Your remaining sons fled. They thought that the immensely strong Bhimasena was like Death himself. On seeing that the brave one had consumed your sons in the battle, Drona showered arrows on him from every direction, like rain pouring on a mountain. We beheld the manliness of Kunti's son and it was extraordinary. Though he was restrained by Drona, yet he killed your sons. Like a bull bears a downpour of rain from above, Bhima tolerated the shower of arrows released by Drona. O great king! Vrikodara performed a wonderful deed. While repulsing Drona, he killed your sons in that battle. Arjuna's elder brother played with your brave sons, like an immensely strong tiger roaming around amidst deer, or like a wolf stationing itself amidst animals and driving those animals away. Thus did Vrikodara drive your sons away in that battle.

“Gangeya, Bhagadatta and maharatha Goutama countered the violent Pandava Arjuna. In that encounter, the atiratha repulsed all their weapons with his own weapons. He despatched many brave soldiers on your side to the land of the dead. Abhimanyu used his arrows to deprive King Ambashtha, famous in the world and foremost among rathas, of his chariot. Deprived of his chariot, he was about to be slain by Subhadra's illustrious son. O lord of men! In shame, he quickly leapt down from his chariot. In the battle, he hurled his sword at Subhadra's great-souled son and ascended onto the chariot of the great-souled Hardikya. Subhadra's son was the destroyer of enemy heroes and was skilled in all the

techniques of war. On seeing the sword descend towards him, he avoided it through his dextrous movements. O lord of the earth! At this, loud sounds of applause were heard among all the soldiers. With Dhrishtadyumna at the forefront, others fought with your soldiers. And those on your side fought with the soldiers of the Pandus. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There was a great battle between those on your side and theirs. They killed each other fiercely and performed extremely difficult deeds. O venerable one! In that battle, the brave ones seized each other by the hair. They fought with their nails and teeth and with their fists and thighs. They used their arms and palms and extremely sharp swords. They sought out each other's weakness and despatched each other to Yama's abode. The father killed the son and the son the father in that battle. Those men fought there, desperate and firm in their resolution.

“O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that battle, beautiful bows with golden handles and extremely expensive ornaments were loosened from the hands of those who had been slain. There were sharp arrows, with tufts made of pure gold and silver and washed in oil. They were as resplendent as snakes that have cast off their skin. There were swords decorated with gold, with handles made out of ivory. There were shields and bow-sheaths for the archers, with golden backs. There were spears, javelins, swords and spikes. All of these were decorated with gold and embellished with gold. They were as bright as gold. O venerable one! Heavy clubs were destroyed and fell down. There were maces, battleaxes and catapults. Colourful spears, decorated with gold, fell down. There were many types and forms of carpets and whisks and fans. There were many types of weapons, dislodged from men who had fallen down. Though they had lost their lives, the maharathas seemed to be alive. Their bodies were shattered through clubs. Their heads were smashed through maces. The men lay on the ground, crushed by elephants, horses and chariots. O king! The earth was strewn everywhere with the bodies of slain horses, men and elephants, which looked like mountains, and seemed to be beautiful. Spears, swords, arrows, javelins, scimitars, spikes, lances, darts, battleaxes, clubs, catapults and *shataghnis*³⁵² fell down on the field of

battle there. The earth was strewn with bodies that had been shattered by weapons. Some were silent. Others made slight sounds. They were covered with blood. The earth was strewn with the bodies of those who had been killed by the enemy and looked beautiful. The arms of the spirited ones had leather guards and bracelets and were smeared with sandalwood paste. Their shattered thighs were like the trunks of elephants. The crowns of the heads were adorned with jewels. The heads bore earrings. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The earth was resplendent with the bull-eyed ones who had fallen down. The earth was covered with armour and golden ornaments drenched in blood. It looked as beautiful as a fire with calm flames. Ornaments were strewn around and bows had fallen down. Bows and gold-tufted arrows were scattered in every direction. There were many shattered chariots, garlanded with nets of bells. Dead horses were lying around, with protruding tongues and drenched in blood. There were the floors of chariots, standards, quivers and pennants. Large and white conch shells belonging to the brave ones were scattered around. Elephants were supine on the ground, their trunks severed and the earth looked as beautiful as a lady adorned with many different kinds of ornaments. There were tuskers in great pain, pierced with lances. They repeatedly let out moans through their trunks. That field of battle was beautiful, as if with mobile mountains. There were carpets of many different hues and cushions for the elephants. Dazzling goads, with handles made of lapis lazuli, fell down. Bells for the kings among elephants were scattered around everywhere. There were colourful seats and hides of *ranku* deer. There were colourful necklaces and golden harnesses for the elephants. There were many shattered implements and lances and kampanas. There were shattered golden breastplates for the horses, soiled with dirt. The severed arms of the horse-riders fell down, with the bracelets still there. There were polished and sharp javelins and polished swords. Torn headdresses were scattered around there. There were colourful arrows in the shape of the half-moon, decorated with gold. There were cushions for the horses and the hides of ranku deer. There were colourful and extremely expensive gems for the crests of those Indras among men. Umbrellas were

scattered around, and whisks and fans. The faces were as beautiful as the lotus or the moon and were still adorned with earrings. The brave ones were ornamented and their beards were well-trimmed. O great king! They were beautiful and radiant, with golden earrings. The earth looked like the sky, with its array of planets and stars. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus did those two large armies, yours and that of the enemy, clash against each other in that battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They were exhausted, scattered and routed. Night set in and nothing could be seen in the field of battle. The soldiers of the Kurus and the Pandavas retreated. The terrible and fearful night set in and the Kurus and the Pandavas withdrew from that extremely terrible encounter. With the time having come, they retreated to their own camps.”

CHAPTER 953(93)

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! Then King Duryodhana, Shakuni Soubala, your son Duhshasana and the invincible son of the suta assembled and consulted each other. How could the sons of Pandu, together with their followers, be vanquished in battle? King Duryodhana spoke to all his advisers, addressing particularly the son of the suta and the immensely strong Soubala. ‘I do not know the reason why Drona, Bhishma, Kripa, Shalya and Somadatta’s son are unable to resist the Parthas in this battle. They are not being killed, but are demolishing my army. O Karna! In this battle, my army is becoming weaker and my weapons are being exhausted. I have been deceived by the Pandavas. They cannot be slain, even by the gods. I am full of doubt as to what I should do in this battle.’ O great king! The son of the suta then spoke to the king. ‘O best of the Bharata lineage! Do not grieve. I will do what is agreeable to you. Let Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, withdraw from this great battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When Gangeya has withdrawn from the battle and has cast aside his weapons, I will kill the Parthas, together with all the Somakas, while Bhishma witnesses the battle. O king! This is the pledge I truthfully take. O king! Bhishma has always acted kindly towards the Pandavas. Bhishma is incapable of vanquishing those maharathas in battle. Bhishma is proud

of his prowess in battle and always loves an encounter. O father!³⁵³ How can he defeat the Pandavas when he encounters them in battle?³⁵⁴ Therefore, you should quickly go to Bhishma's camp. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You should request Bhishma to cast aside his weapons in battle. When Bhishma casts aside his weapons, you will see the Pandavas killed. O king! I will alone accomplish this in the battle, together with their well-wishers and their relatives.' Having been thus addressed by Karna, your son, Duryodhana, spoke these words to his brother, Duhshasana. 'O Duhshasana! Let all those, who will come with me, be appropriately dressed. Quickly make all the arrangements.' O king! Having thus spoken, the lord of men then addressed Karna. 'O supreme among men! O scorcher of enemies! Having requested Bhishma to withdraw from the battle, I will swiftly return and come before you. O tiger among men! You will then act in this battle.' O lord of the earth! Without any delay, your son departed.

“He left with his brothers, like Shatakratu with all the gods. His brother, Duhshasana, quickly made his brother, who was a tiger among kings and with the valour of a tiger, ascend a horse. The king was adorned with armlets and bracelets and wore a crown on his head. O great king! Dhritarashtra's son was as resplendent as the great Indra. He was smeared with fragrant sandalwood paste. He looked like a *bhandi* flower³⁵⁵ and had a golden complexion. He was clad in garments that had no dirt on them. The king proceeded with the sporting gait of a lion. He was as beautiful as an autumn sun with unblemished rays. That tiger among men departed for Bhishma's camp. He was followed by great archers, who were famous in all the worlds as archers. His brothers, great archers, also followed him, like the thirty gods with Vasava. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were others astride horses, and still others astride elephants. Others on chariots, the foremost of men, surrounded him in every direction. His well-wishers had taken up arms for the sake of protecting the lord of the earth. They were with him, like the immortals with Shakra in heaven. The maharatha among the Kouravas was

worshipped by the Kurus. O king! He went towards the illustrious Gangeya's abode. The king was followed and surrounded by his brothers in every direction. Occasionally, he raised his right arm. It was as muscular as the trunk of an elephant and was capable of destroying all enemies. He raised that arm and accepted the worship of the kings, who were in every direction, hands joined in salutation. He heard sweet words from the residents of many countries. The immensely illustrious one was praised by bards and minstrels. The lord of all the lords of the worlds honoured all of them in return. Great-souled ones surrounded him in every direction with golden lamps, with fragrant oil as fuel. The king was surrounded by these auspicious and golden lamps. He was as beautiful as the moon, surrounded by the resplendent large planets. There were attendants with golden headdresses, and with drums and sticks in their hands. They gently asked the people in every direction to make way. Having reached Bhishma's beautiful abode, the lord of men got down from his horse and approached Bhishma. He paid his respects to Bhishma and sat down on an excellent and golden seat. It was beautiful everywhere and was covered with a wonderful carpet.

“He joined his hands in salutation and spoke to Bhishma, his voice choking and his eyes full of tears. ‘O destroyer of enemies! We sought your protection and resorted to this war. In the battle, we thought we possessed the enterprise to defeat the gods and the asuras combined, together with Indra, not to speak of the brave sons of Pandu, with their well-wishers and their relatives. O lord! O Gangeya! Therefore, you should show your compassion towards me. Slay the brave sons of Pandu, like the great Indra against the danavas. O mighty-armed one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You earlier said that you would kill the Somakas and the Panchalas, together with the Pandavas. Act accordingly and make your words come true. Kill the assembled Parthas and the great archers, the Somakas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Make those words come true. O lord! O king! If you protect the Pandavas because of compassion, because of your hatred of me, or because of my misfortune, then I seek your permission to allow Karna, the ornament of any battle, to

fight. He will defeat the Parthas, with their well-wishers and their relatives, in battle.’ Having said this, the king, your son Duryodhana, did not say anything more to Bhishma, whose valour was terrible.”

CHAPTER 954(94)

‘Sanjaya said, “These words spoken by your son were like stakes and Bhishma was pierced by them. He was overcome by great grief, but did not say anything unpleasant in reply. Overcome by grief and anger, he thought for a very long time. Wounded by these stakes, he sighed like a serpent. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The supreme among those who know the worlds then raised his eyes. He seemed to burn the worlds, with the gods, the asuras and the gandharvas, with his anger. However, he spoke these conciliatory words to your son. ‘O Duryodhana! Why are you piercing me with words that are like stakes? To the best of my strength, I have always sought to do that which brings you pleasure. Desiring your welfare, I am ready to give up my life in this battle. When the brave Pandava gratified Agni in Khandava, he defeated even Shakra in battle.

That is proof.³⁵⁶ O mighty-armed one! When the gandharvas captured you, Pandu’s energetic son freed you. That is proof. O lord! At that time, all your brave brothers ran away. And so did Radheya, the son of a suta. That is proof. In Virata’s city, he singly attacked all of us together. That is proof. He was angry and defeated both me and Drona in battle. He robbed the garments of Karna, Drona’s son and the great maharatha Kripa. That is proof. Partha vanquished the Nivatakavachas in battle, whom even Vasava found to be invincible in an encounter. That is proof. Who is capable of vanquishing Pandava, who prides himself in an encounter, in battle? O Suyodhana! Because of your delusion, you do not know what should be said and what should not be said. A man who is about to die thinks that all trees are made of gold. O Gandhari’s son! In that fashion, you are looking at everything in a contrary way. You have yourself created this great enmity with the Pandavas and the Srinjayas. Fight with them in the battle now and show us your manliness. O tiger among men! I will myself kill all

the assembled Somakas and the Panchalas, avoiding Shikhandi. Slain by them in battle, I will go to Yama's abode. Or, I will kill them in battle and give you pleasure. Shikhandi was earlier born as a girl in the king's abode. By virtue of a boon, she was born as a man.³⁵⁷ This is that lady Shikhandi. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I will not kill him, even if it means giving up my own life. Shikhandi is the one whom the creator made a lady earlier. O Gandhari's son! Sleep happily. I will fight a great battle tomorrow, one that will be spoken about as long as the earth exists.' O lord of men! Having been thus addressed, your son departed. He paid respects to his elder by lowering his head and left for his own residence. Having returned, the king asked his attendants to leave. The destroyer of enemies quickly entered and having entered, the king passed the night.'"

‘Sanjaya said, “When night passed and it was morning, the king arose. The king instructed all the warriors, ‘Prepare for battle. In the encounter today, the angry Bhishma will kill all the Somakas.’ O king! On hearing Duryodhana’s many lamentations in the night, he³⁵⁸ regarded them as instructions unto himself. He was supremely depressed and censured what the other had said. Shantanu’s son thought for a long time and desired to encounter Arjuna in battle. O great king! Duryodhana understood from the signs what Gangeya had been thinking about and instructed Duhshasana. ‘O Duhshasana! Let chariots quickly be yoked, so that Bhishma can be protected. Let thirty-two entire divisions be instructed accordingly. What we have thought about for many years has now come to pass. With their soldiers, the Pandavas will be slain and the kingdom will be obtained. I think that Bhishma’s protection is our task now. Protected by us, he will cheerfully slaughter the Parthas in this battle. The one with the pure soul said, “I will not kill Shikhandi. He was a lady earlier. Therefore, I should avoid him in battle. O mighty-armed one! The world knows that, in an attempt to bring pleasure to my father, I gave up women and a prosperous kingdom earlier.”³⁵⁹ O foremost among men! Therefore, I will not kill in battle anyone who has been born a woman, or has been a woman earlier. I am telling you this truthfully. O king! Shikhandi was a woman earlier and you have heard me tell you this when preparations were being made for the war. She was born as Shikhandini. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having been a woman, she was born as a man and wishes to fight. But I can never release arrows at her. O son!³⁶⁰ But if there are any other kshatriyas who desire the victory of the Pandavas in battle, I will kill them all—as soon as they come within reach of my arrows.” These were the words spoken to me by Gangeya, foremost among the Bharata lineage and skilled in knowledge of the sacred texts. Therefore, with all my heart, I think that Bhishma’s protection is most important. In the great forest, a wolf can kill a lion that is unprotected. Let Shikhandi not be like a wolf

that kills a tiger. Let our maternal uncle, Shakuni, Shalya, Kripa, Drona and Vivimshati make endeavours to protect Gangeya. If he is protected, victory is certain.’ On hearing Duryodhana’s words, all the kings surrounded Gangeya from every direction, with a large number of chariots. Your sons surrounded Gangeya and got ready to fight. The earth and the firmament trembled and the Pandavas were agitated. The maharathas³⁶¹ possessed chariots and well-trained elephants. Armoured, they stationed themselves and surrounded Bhishma in that battle. Just as the thirty gods protect the wielder of the vajra in a battle between the gods and the asuras, in that way, all of them were stationed to protect the maharatha.

“King Duryodhana again spoke to his brothers. ‘Yudhamanyu is protecting Arjuna’s left wheel and Uttamouja the right, while Arjuna is protecting Shikhandi. O Duhshasana! Act so that he cannot kill Bhishma, while protected by Partha and while he³⁶² is abandoned by us.’ On hearing his brother’s words, your son, Duhshasana, left with the army, with Bhishma at the forefront. On seeing Bhishma surrounded by that large number of chariots, Arjuna, best of rathas, spoke to Dhrishtadyumna. ‘O unblemished one! Let Shikhandi, tiger among men, be placed in front of Bhishma. O one without decay! Establish the Panchala there and I will myself be his protector.’ Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, then advanced with his soldiers. In that encounter, he stationed his soldiers in the form of a large vyuha known as *saravatobhadra*.³⁶³ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Kripa, Kritavarma, maharatha Shaibya, Shakuni, Saindhava, Sudakshina from Kamboja and all your sons were stationed in front of all the soldiers and in front of the vyuha, together with Bhishma. O venerable one! Drona, Bhurishrava, Shalya and Bhagadatta armoured and stationed themselves on the right flank of the vyuha. Ashvatthama, Somadatta and the two maharathas from Avanti protected the left flank, together with a large army. O great king! O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! To counter the Pandavas, Duryodhana stationed himself in the midst of the vyuha, surrounded by the Trigartas. Alambusa, best among rathas, and maharatha Shrutayu armoured and stationed themselves at the rear of the

vyuha and behind all the soldiers. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus did those on your side construct a vyuha. When they were armoured, they looked like blazing fires. At this, King Yudhishtira, Pandava Bhimasena and Madri's sons, Nakula and Sahadeva, armoured and stationed themselves in the vyuha, ahead of all the soldiers. Dhrishtadyumna, Virata and maharatha Satyaki, the destroyers of enemy ranks, stationed themselves, with a large army. O great king! Shikhandi, Vijaya,³⁶⁴ the rakshasa Ghatotkacha, the mighty-armed Chekitana and the valiant Kuntibhoja were ready for battle, surrounded by a large army. The great archer, Abhimanyu, maharatha Drupada and the five brothers from Kekaya were armoured and stationed ready for battle. O venerable one! Thus did the brave Pandavas, invincible in battle, create a great vyuha as a counter-vyuh in that encounter and were ready to fight.

“In that encounter, the kings on your side suddenly rushed, with great enterprise, to do battle. O king! Placing Bhishma in the front, they advanced against the Parthas in that battle. O king! In a similar way, the Pandavas placed Bhimasena at the forefront, wishing to fight against Bhishma and desiring victory in that encounter. There were war cries and sounds of joy. There were the sounds of saws and cow horns. The Pandavas played on battledrums, drums, cymbals and smaller drums and there was a terrible roar, as they advanced. There were the sounds of battledrums, drums, other drums and conch shells on our side. There were delighted roars, like those of lions, and other shouts, as we roared back in return and quickly advanced against them. We advanced forcefully and angrily and a tumultuous sound arose. They rushed against each other and struck each other. Because of that great sound, the earth began to tremble. Birds uttered terrible shrieks and began to fly around. The sun had risen with all its rays, but now seemed to be dimmed. There was a turbulent wind, signifying great disaster. Fearful jackals began to roam around, howling terribly. O great king! All of this seemed to tell us that a great calamity was at hand. O king! The directions blazed and ash began to shower down. There was a shower of bones mixed with blood. The mounts began to weep and tears began to fall from their eyes. O lord of the earth! Because of

their anxiety, they discharged urine and excrement. Man-eating rakshasas began to roar in terrible tones. We saw that jackals, cranes and crows began to swoop down. Dogs uttered many terrible howls. Flaming meteors struck against the sun and suddenly fell down on the ground. All this signified a great fear. In that great encounter, the two large armies of the Pandavas and the sons of Dhritarashtra clashed. There was the din of conch shells and drums and this caused a tremor, like that of a forest agitated by a storm. In that inauspicious moment, kings, elephants and horses clashed against each other and the tremendous noise was like that of oceans agitated by a tempest.””

CHAPTER 956(96)

‘Sanjaya said, “The energetic Abhimanyu, foremost among rathas, was borne on steeds that were of a tawny colour and advanced against Duryodhana’s large army. He brought down a shower of arrows, like clouds pouring down rain. The bulls among the Kurus who were on your side could not resist Subhadra’s angry son in battle. That destroyer of enemies possessed a great number of weapons and he immersed himself in that inexhaustible ocean of soldiers. O king! In that encounter, he released many arrows that destroyed enemies. They conveyed the brave kshatriyas to the abode of the king of the dead. In that battle, Subhadra’s angry son unleashed arrows that were like Yama’s staff. They were flaming and terrible, like poisonous serpents. Phalguna’s son quickly brought down charioteers from their chariots, horse-riders from the backs of horses and elephant-riders together with the elephants. In that great battle, the lords of the earth cheerfully honoured his extraordinary deeds and praised Phalguna’s son. Subhadra’s son drove away many colourful armies, like masses of cotton blown away by the wind in every direction. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Driven away by him, your soldiers could not find a protector and were like elephants stuck in the mud. O king! Having driven all your soldiers away, Abhimanyu, supreme among men, stood like a flaming fire, without any smoke. All those on your side could not counter that destroyer of enemies and were like insects, driven by destiny, before a

flaming fire. Having struck all the enemies of the Pandavas, the maharatha and great archer was like the wielder of the vajra with his vajra. His bow had a golden back. O king! As it was moved around in every direction, it was seen to be as radiant as lightning.³⁶⁵ The arrows released from his bow in that battle were sharp and yellow. They were like flocks of bees, visiting blossoming trees in the forest. That is the way Subhadra's great-souled son roamed around. His chariot roared like the clouds and people could not find an opportunity to strike him. He confounded Kripa, Drona, Drona's son, Brihadbala and Saindhava, the great archer. He moved around with skill and dexterity. O venerable one! As he tormented your army, I saw that his bow was drawn in the shape of a circle and was like the circular halo that is around the sun. Brave kshatriyas saw this and were tormented by his arrows. Because of his deeds, they thought the world now had two Phalgunas. O great king! Oppressed by him, that great army of the Bharatas ran here and there, like a woman intoxicated with liquor. He drove away your soldiers and made the maharathas tremble and delighted his well-wishers, like Vasava after vanquishing Maya.³⁶⁶ Driven away by him in that battle, your soldiers uttered lamentations of woe and these sounded like the roar of the clouds.

“O venerable one! On hearing that awful wail amidst your soldiers, like that of the ocean agitated by the force of the wind at the time of the new moon or the full moon, King Duryodhana spoke to Rishyashringa's son.

‘This great archer who is Krishna's son³⁶⁷ is like a second Phalguna. He is driving away the soldiers in rage, like Vritra against the army of the gods. I do not see any other great medicine against him in this battle, except your own self. O best of the rakshasas! You are skilled in all forms of knowledge. O brave one! Go swiftly and slay Subhadra's son in battle. We will kill Partha, with Bhishma and Drona leading us.’ Thus addressed and following the instructions of your son, the powerful and strong Indra among the rakshasas quickly advanced to do battle. He emitted a loud roar, like the slayer of Bala at the time of the monsoon. O king! At this great sound, the mighty army of the Pandavas trembled in every direction, like a

full ocean. O king! Frightened by that roar, many men gave up their beloved lives and fell down on the ground. Krishna's son was delighted and grasped his bow and arrows. He seemed to be dancing around on his chariot and attacked the rakshasa. The rakshasa was enraged and approached Arjuna's son in that battle. Stationing himself at a short distance, he started to drive away the soldiers. In that battle, he killed the great army of the Pandavas. The rakshasa attacked them in the encounter, like Bali against the army of the gods. O venerable one! There was great oppression and slaughter among those soldiers. The rakshasa, terrible in form, killed them in that battle. He released thousands of arrows on the great army of the Pandavas. The rakshasa displayed his valour and drove them back in that battle. Thus slaughtered by the rakshasa, terrible in form, the army of the Pandavas was frightened and fled from the field of battle. He crushed those soldiers, like an elephant amidst lotuses.

“In that encounter, the immensely strong one then attacked the sons of Droupadi. The great archers who were Droupadi's sons were armoured and became wrathful. All of them advanced against the rakshasa, like five planets against the sun. Prativindhya swiftly pierced the immensely strong rakshasa with sharp, vigorous and iron arrows. They penetrated his armour and the supreme among rakshasas looked resplendent. He was like a giant mass of rain clouds, penetrated by the rays of the sun. O king! He was struck by arrows that were embellished with gold and Rishyashringa's son looked like a mountain with a flaming summit. In that great battle, the five brothers pierced the Indra among rakshasas with sharp arrows that were embellished with gold. O king! Pierced by terrible arrows that were like angry snakes, Alambusha became as angry as a king of elephants. O great king! O venerable one! He was pierced within a short instant. Having been wounded, the maharatha remained unconscious for a long time. When he regained consciousness, in his rage, he increased his dimensions to double of what they were. He sliced down their arrows, standards and bows. As if smiling, he pierced each of them with three arrows. Maharatha Alambusha seemed to be dancing around on his chariot. The rakshasa was angry and in his rage, the immensely strong one killed the horses and the charioteers of

the great-souled ones. In great delight, he again pierced them with extremely sharp arrows. He used many different kinds of arrows, in hundreds and thousands. Those great archers were bereft of their chariots by the rakshasa and the traveller of the night swiftly rushed against them, wishing to kill them. On seeing them thus oppressed in battle by the evil-souled rakshasa, Arjuna's son attacked the rakshasa in that battle. The battle that commenced was like that between Vritra and Vasava. All those on your side and the maharatha Pandavas witnessed it. They encountered each other in that great battle and blazed with rage. O great king! They were immensely strong and their eyes were red with rage. The warriors glanced towards each other, like the fire at the destruction of a yuga. There was a terrible encounter that was fierce and awful. It was like that between Shakra and Shambara,³⁶⁸ during the battle between the gods and the asuras.”

CHAPTER 957(97)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! Arjuna's brave son killed many maharathas in battle. How did Alambusa counter him in the encounter? How did Subhadra's son, the destroyer of enemy heroes, fight with Rishyashringa's son? Tell me all this in detail, exactly as it occurred in the course of the battle. O Sanjaya! What did Dhananjaya do against my soldiers, and Bhima, foremost among strong ones, rakshasa Ghatotkacha, Nakula, Sahadeva and maharatha Satyaki? O Sanjaya! Tell me all this, because you are skilled.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O venerable one! I will later tell you about the battle that took place between the Indra among the rakshasas and Subhadra's son. It made the body hair stand up. I will also recount to you the valour of Arjuna and Pandava Bhimasena in the battle and that of Nakula and Sahadeva in the encounter. I will also tell you about the extraordinary and wonderful deeds of those on your side, performed without fear and with Bhishma and Drona at the forefront. In that encounter against maharatha Abhimanyu, Alambusa roared extremely loudly. He advanced, roaring

again and again, and asking him³⁶⁹ to wait. O king! In that battle, Subhadra's son also roared repeatedly like a lion. He attacked the great archer who was Rishyashringa's son and was also a sworn enemy of his fathers. The man and the rakshasa, foremost among rathas, swiftly confronted each other in battle on their respective chariots, like a god and a danava. The foremost among rakshasas was skilled in maya and Phalguna's son was skilled in the use of divine weapons. O great king! Krishna's son used three sharp arrows to pierce Rishyashringa's son in that battle and then again pierced him with five arrows. Alambusa became angry and pierced Krishna's son in the chest with nine swift arrows, like forcefully striking a giant elephant with a goad. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that battle, the traveller of the night, swift in action, used a thousand arrows to oppress Arjuna's son. Abhimanyu became angry. He shot nine sharp arrows with drooping tufts at the rakshasa's giant chest. They quickly pierced his body and penetrated his inner organs. O king! The limbs of that supreme among rakshasas were mangled and he was as beautiful as a mountain with blossoming kimshukas. Bearing those gold-encrusted arrows, the best of the rakshasas, immensely strong, was as dazzling as a flaming mountain. O great king! At this, Rishyashringa's immensely strong son became wrathful. He enveloped Krishna's son, who was like the great Indra, with arrows. He released sharp arrows that were like Yama's staff. These pierced Abhimanyu and fell down on the ground. Arjuna's son shot arrows that were decorated with gold. They pierced Alambusa and penetrated the ground. In that battle, Subhadra's son used straight-tufted arrows to make the rakshasa retreat, like Shakra in a battle against Maya. Having been repulsed, the rakshasa, the scorcher of enemies, wished to kill his enemies in the battle and resorted to his great powers of dark maya. He caused everything on the ground to be enveloped in darkness. Abhimanyu could not be seen. And those on one's own side, or that of the enemy, could not be distinguished in that battle. On seeing that terrible and great gloom, Abhimanyu, the descendant of the Kuru lineage, invoked the supreme weapon known as *bhaskara*.³⁷⁰ O lord of the

earth! At this, everything in the universe again became visible. Thus, the maya of the evil-souled rakshasa was destroyed. In that encounter, the greatly valorous Indra among rakshasas became angry. He shrouded the supreme of men with straight-tufted arrows. The rakshasa used many other kinds of maya. But Phalguna's son, skilled in the use of all weapons and with an immeasurable soul, countered all of them. The rakshasa's maya was destroyed and he was wounded with arrows. He discarded his chariot and fled in great fear.

“After having defeated the rakshasa, who used deceitful means to fight, Arjuna's son began to crush your soldiers in the battle. He was like a wild king of elephants, crazy with musth, agitating a pond that was full of lotuses. Bhishma, Shantanu's son, saw that the soldiers were being routed. He surrounded Subhadra's son with a large number of chariots. Many brave maharathas among the sons of Dhritarashtra created a circle around him. A single one fought against many and they struck him with firm arrows. That brave ratha was like his father in valour. He was Vasudeva's equal in valour and strength. He was supreme among all wielders of weapons and in that battle, performed many deeds that were like the two of them, his father and his maternal uncle.³⁷¹ O king! Dhananjaya began to destroy your soldiers. Wishing to rescue his son, the intolerant one arrived at the spot where he³⁷² was fighting with Bhishma. O king! In that battle, your father, Devavrata, attacked Partha in the encounter, like Svarbhanu³⁷³ against the sun. O lord of the earth! With chariots, elephants and horses, your sons surrounded Bhishma in that battle, wishing to protect him in every direction. O king! In that fashion, the Pandavas surrounded Dhananjaya. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The armoured ones engaged in a great battle.

“O king! Sharadvata stationed himself in front of Bhishma. He pierced Arjuna with twenty-five arrows. To accomplish a pleasant task for Pandava, Satyaki attacked him, like a tiger against an elephant, and pierced him with sharp arrows. Goutama was enraged. In return, he swiftly pierced Madhava³⁷⁴ in the chest with nine arrows that were tufted with

the feathers of herons. Shini's descendant became extremely angry at having been pierced. The maharatha unleashed a terrible arrow at Goutama, one capable of taking his life away. On seeing it descend with great force, as radiant as Shakra's vajra, Drona's son, driven by supreme rage, angrily sliced it down into two. Avoiding Goutama, supreme among rathas, in that battle, Shini's descendant then attacked Drona's son in that encounter, like Rahu in the sky against the moon. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! However, Drona's son sliced his bow into two and once his bow had been severed, oppressed him with arrows. The destroyer of enemies picked up another bow that was capable of bearing a great burden. O great king! He struck Drona's son in the arms and the chest with six arrows. Having been thus pierced and wounded, he lost his senses for some time. He sat down on the floor of his chariot, using the pole of his standard for support. Having regained his senses, Drona's powerful son angrily pierced Varshneya³⁷⁵ in that encounter with iron arrows. These pierced Shini's descendant and penetrated the ground, like a powerful and young snake entering a hole during the spring. In that encounter, Drona's son roared like a lion. He used another broad-headed arrow to sever Madhava's supreme standard. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O great king! He again unleashed a shower of arrows to envelope him, like clouds covering the sun at the end of summer. O great king! Satyaki destroyed that net of arrows and quickly covered Drona's son with many nets of arrows. He was like the sun that had emerged from a net of clouds. Shini's descendant, the destroyer of enemy heroes, scorched Drona's son. The immensely strong Satyaki roared and again enveloped him with thousands of arrows. On seeing that his son was eclipsed, like the moon afflicted by Rahu, Bharadvaja's powerful son attacked Shini's descendant. O king! In that great battle, he pierced him with extremely sharp arrows, desiring to rescue his son, who was being tormented by Varshneya. In that battle, having defeated the maharatha son of his preceptor, Satyaki then pierced Drona with twenty arrows that were completely made out of iron. Kounteya, borne on white steeds, was immeasurable in his soul. In that encounter, the maharatha angrily attacked Drona. O great king! In that

great battle, Drona clashed against Partha and it was like Budha and Shukra³⁷⁶ meeting each other in the firmament.””

CHAPTER 958(98)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! How did those brave and great archers, Drona and Pandava Dhananjaya, encounter each other in that battle? Tell me. Pandava was always the beloved of Bharadvaja’s intelligent son. O Sanjaya! In any encounter, the preceptor was always the beloved of Partha. Those two rathas are proud in battle and are as fierce as lions. How did Dhananjaya and Bharadvaja’s son clash against each other in the encounter?”

‘Sanjaya replied, “In a battle, Drona does not know Partha as someone who is dear to himself. Placing the dharma of kshatriyas at the forefront, Partha does not acknowledge a preceptor in an encounter. O king! Kshatriyas do not avoid each other in an encounter. Without any fear, they fight with their fathers and their brothers. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that battle, Partha pierced Drona with three arrows. But he³⁷⁷ paid no heed to the arrows that had been released from Partha’s bow in that battle. In that battle, Partha again covered him with a shower of arrows and he³⁷⁸ blazed in anger, like a conflagration in a deserted forest. In that battle, Drona released straight-tufted arrows towards Arjuna. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O Indra among kings! But those were speedily countered. O king! King Duryodhana instructed Susharma to protect Drona’s flank in that battle. The angry king of Trigarta drew his bow and in that battle, enveloped Partha with arrows with iron heads. O king! The arrows released by both of them³⁷⁹ were resplendent in the sky. O great king! They looked like swans in the autumn sky. O lord! Those dazzling arrows reached Kounteya and penetrated, like birds entering a tree that is lowered from the burden of succulent fruit. Arjuna, supreme among rathas, roared in that battle. In that encounter, he pierced the king of Trigarta and his sons with arrows. Partha pierced them, like the fire at the destruction of a yuga. But having made up their minds to die, they did not retreat from

the encounter with Partha. They showered arrows towards Pandava's chariot. O Indra among kings! Pandava countered that shower of arrows with his own shower of arrows. He was like a mountain receiving a downpour of rain. We witnessed the extraordinary dexterity of Bibhatsu's hands. The brave one countered many showers of arrows that were difficult to withstand, like the wind scattering masses of clouds. The gods and the danavas were delighted with Partha's deeds. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Partha angrily advanced against Trigarta in battle. O great king! He released the vayavya weapon against the head of their army. A turbulent wind arose in the sky. It brought down masses of trees and killed the soldiers. Drona beheld that extremely terrible vayavya weapon. O great king! He released the extremely terrible weapon known as *shaila*.³⁸⁰ When Drona released this weapon in the great battle, the wind was pacified and the directions became placid. But Pandu's brave son made the Trigartas, roaming around on their chariots, dispirited in that battle. They lost their valour and retreated.

“King Duryodhana, Kripa, supreme among rathas, Ashvatthama, Shalya, Sudakshina from Kamboja, Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti and Bahlika and the army of the Bahlikas surrounded Partha from every direction with a great number of chariots. In a similar way, Bhagadatta and the immensely strong Shrutayu surrounded Bhima from every direction with a large army of elephants. O lord of the earth! Bhurishrava, Shala and Soubala quickly countered Madri's sons with many colourful arrows. With all the sons of Dhritarashtra and their soldiers, Bhishma attacked Yudhishtira and surrounded him from every direction. On seeing that army of elephants descend, the brave Partha Vrikodara licked the corners of his mouth, like a king of deer in a forest. The best of rathas grasped a club in the great battle. He swiftly got down from his chariot and terrified your soldiers. On seeing him, with the club in his hand, the elephant-riders made endeavours to surround Bhimasena from every side in that battle. But Pandava penetrated the midst of the elephants and began to roam around. He was like the sun in the middle of a large mass of clouds. The bull of the Pandava lineage slew that army of elephants with his club. He

was like the wind, scattering a large mass of clouds. Those tuskers were slaughtered by the powerful Bhimasena. They shrieked in that battle, roaring like clouds. There were many wounds on his body, resulting from the tusks of the elephants. Partha dazzled in the forefront of that battle, like a flowering ashoka tree. He seized some elephants by their tusks and uprooted their tusks. He used those tusks to strike the elephants on their temples. He brought them down in that battle, like Yama with the staff in his hand. The club was covered with blood and his body was spattered with fat and marrow. With blood on his armlets, he seemed to be like Rudra. O king! Thus slaughtered, the remaining mighty elephants fled in all the directions, crushing their own soldiers in the process. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The gigantic elephants were driven away in all the directions. All of Duryodhana's soldiers retreated from the field of battle.”

CHAPTER 959(99)

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! It was midday and the encounter raged. There was a terrible battle, destructive of people, between Bhishma and the Somakas. Gangeya, best among rathas, pierced the Pandava soldiers with hundreds and thousands of sharp arrows. Your father, Devavrata, crushed those soldiers, like a herd of cattle, crushing reaped paddy. Dhrishtadyumna, Shikhandi, Virata and Drupada attacked Bhishma in that battle and struck the maharatha with arrows. He pierced Dhrishtadyumna and Virata with three arrows each. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He then dispatched an iron arrow towards Virata. O king! Pierced by Bhishma, the destroyer of enemies, in that battle, those great archers became as angry as serpents that have been trod upon. Shikhandi pierced the grandfather of the Bharatas. But the undecaying one thought him to be a woman and did not strike him back. In that battle, Dhrishtadyumna was overcome with rage, like a flaming fire. He used three arrows to pierce the grandfather in the arms and the chest. Drupada pierced Bhishma with twenty-five arrows, Virata with ten arrows and Shikhandi with twenty-five. O great king! The great-souled Bhishma was pierced in that battle and was

as beautiful as a blossoming red ashoka tree in the spring. Gangeya pierced them back with three arrows that travelled straight.³⁸¹ O venerable one! He severed Virata's bow with a broad-headed arrow. In the forefront of that battle, he took up another bow and pierced Bhishma with five sharp arrows and his charioteer with three. O great king! Bhima, Droupadi's five sons, the five brothers from Kekaya and Satvata Satyaki, desiring Yudhishtira's welfare, attacked Gangeya. They wished to protect Panchala Dhrishtadyumna in that battle. O lord of men! All those on your side raised their weapons to protect Bhishma and attacked the Pandu soldiers with their own soldiers.

““There was an extremely terrible battle between those on your side and those on their side. It involved men, horses, chariots and elephants and extended Yama's kingdom. Charioteers clashed with charioteers and sent them to Yama's abode. Others attacked, men, elephant-riders and horse-riders. They used straight-tufted arrows to dispatch each other to the hereafter. O lord of the earth! Many terrible weapons were used there. Chariots lost their horses, rathas and charioteers and in that battle, were dragged away in different directions. O king! In that battle, they crushed many men and horses. They seemed to be like the wind, or like the cities of the gandharvas. Energetic and armoured rathas were bereft of their chariots. They were adorned with earrings and headdresses and all of them were ornamented with golden armlets. They were the equals of the sons of the gods in beauty and bravery and Shakra's equal in fighting. They surpassed Vaishravana³⁸² in prosperity and Brihaspati in wisdom. O lord of the world! The brave ones who were there were the lords of all the worlds. They were seen to be driven away, like ordinary men. O best of men! The tusk-ers were bereft of the best of riders. They ran around and fell down, shrieking loudly and crushing their own ranks. O venerable one! Their armour, whisks, umbrellas and standards were strewn around, as were the housings, bells and lances. Devastated, they were seen to run away in the ten directions. They were like mountains or clouds and roared like rain clouds. O lord of the earth! Some elephant-riders were deprived

of their elephants, both on your side and on theirs. They were seen to run away in that encounter. There were horses that had come from many countries and were decorated with gold. They were as fast as the wind and were there in hundreds and thousands. With the horses slain, horse-riders grasped swords in every direction. They were seen to run away, or chase others away, in that encounter. In that great battle, elephants clashed with elephants that were running away and swiftly crushed infantry and steeds. O king! In that battle, elephants crushed chariots and chariots clashed against infantry and horses. O king! In that battle, horses crushed men in the course of the encounter. O king! In this fashion, they crushed each other in diverse ways. That terrible battle raged and it gave rise to great fear. A fearful river began to flow, with blood as its waves. It was choked with masses of bones and the hair³⁸³ was like moss and weeds. Chariots were the lakes and arrows were the currents, with horses as the unassailable fish. It was covered with heads as pebbles. It was infested with elephants as crocodiles. Armour and headdresses constituted the foam. Bows were islands and swords were turtles. Flags and pennants were trees along the banks. Men were the banks that the river destroyed. It was infested with large numbers of predatory creatures and it extended Yama's kingdom. O king! In that great battle, many brave kshatriyas gave up their fear. They sought to cross the river on boats made out of horses, elephants and chariots. In that battle, this river conveyed all the cowards who had become overcome by lassitude, just as Vaitarani conveys all those who are dead to the capital of the king of the dead. The kshatriyas present witnessed the great carnage. They exclaimed, 'It is because of Duryodhana's crimes that the Kouravas are headed towards destruction. The sons of Pandu possess many qualities. Why did Dhritrashtra's son, the lord of men, hate them? He is evil in his soul. He has been overcome by avarice.' O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Many words of this kind were heard there. They were full of praise for the Pandavas and were extremely terrible about your sons. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing these words spoken by all the warriors, your son, Duryodhana, who had caused offence to all the worlds, spoke these words to Bhishma,

Drona, Kripa and Shalya. ‘Fight with pride. What is the reason for delay?’ O king! The extremely terrible battle between the Kurus and the Pandavas raged again, a consequence of the gambling with the dice. O Vichitravirya’s son! You paid no attention when the great-souled ones tried to restrain you then. Behold the fruits of that. O king! O lord of the earth! The sons of Pandu, their soldiers, their followers and the Kouravas do not desire to protect their lives in this battle. That is the reason there is this terrible destruction of people. O tiger among men! O king! It has been caused by destiny and your evil policy.”

CHAPTER 960(100)

‘Sanjaya said, “O tiger among men! There were kings who were following Susharma’s lead and Arjuna used sharp arrows to dispatch them to the abode of the king of the dead. In that battle, Susharma pierced Partha with arrows. He again pierced Vasudeva with seventy and Partha with nine. The maharatha who was Shakra’s son repulsed them with his own shower of arrows. In that battle, he dispatched Susharma’s warriors to Yama’s abode. They were slain by Partha, like the fire at the destruction of a yuga. O king! Those maharathas were overcome with fear and fled from the field of battle. O venerable one! Some abandoned their horses. Others gave up their chariots. And still others discarded their elephants and fled in the ten directions. Others fled from the field of battle, with their horses, elephants and chariots. O lord of the earth! They ran away with great speed. In that great battle, foot soldiers threw away their weapons. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As they ran away, they ignored everything else. They were repeatedly restrained by Susharma of the Trigartas and by other chiefs among the kings. But they did not stay in that battle.

“On seeing that his army was being routed, your son, Duryodhana, placed Bhishma at the forefront of the battle, ahead of all the soldiers. Using the best of his great endeavour, he attacked Dhananjaya, for the sake of protecting the life of the lord of Trigarta. He alone remained stationed in the battle, together with all his brothers, and showered many different kinds of arrows. The remaining men ran away. O king! The Pandavas were

armoured. For Phalguna's sake, they used their best endeavours to go to the spot where Bhishma was. They knew that the wielder of Gandiva was invincible. But cries of lamentation had arisen in all directions from the spot where Bhishma was. In that encounter, the brave one with the palm tree on his standard used straight-tufted arrows to shroud the army of the Pandavas. All the Kurus and the Pandavas seemed to be one single mass. O great king! They fought and the sun reached midday. Satyaki pierced Kritavarma with five iron arrows. The brave one remained stationed in the battle, releasing thousands of arrows. King Drupada pierced Drona with sharp arrows. He again pierced him with seventy arrows and his charioteer with seven. Bhimasena pierced his great-grandfather, King Bahlika, and emitted a loud roar, like a tiger in a forest.³⁸⁴ Arjuna's son pierced Chitrasena with many fast arrows. Chitrasena was severely pierced in the chest with three arrows. These two great ones among men encountered each other in the battle and were radiant. O king! They were like the extremely terrible Budha and Shanaishchara in the sky.³⁸⁵ Subhadra's son, the destroyer of enemy heroes, roared powerfully, after having slain his horses with four arrows and his charioteer with nine. O lord of the earth! With his horses slain, the maharatha swiftly descended from his chariot and climbed onto Durmukha's chariot. Drona pierced Drupada with straight-tufted arrows and the valorous one also swiftly pierced his charioteer. At the head of his soldiers, King Drupada was thus oppressed. Remembering his earlier hostility, he retreated on swift horses. In an instant, Bhimasena deprived King Bahlika of his horses, charioteer and chariot, while all the soldiers looked on. O great king! Bahlika, supreme among men, was overcome by panic and confronted a great danger. He swiftly climbed onto maharatha Lakshmana's chariot. Satyaki repulsed maharatha Kritavarma. O king! He attacked the grandfather with many arrows. He pierced Bharata³⁸⁶ with sixty sharp arrows that were tufted with hair and seemed to be dancing around on his chariot, brandishing his large bow. The grandfather hurled a giant and iron javelin towards him. It was decorated with gold and was extremely swift. It was as beautiful as a

maiden of the serpents. On seeing it suddenly descend, extremely energetic and like death, the immensely famous Varshneya destroyed it with his dexterity. That extremely terrible javelin could not touch Varshneya. It fell down on the face of the ground, like a giant meteor that has lost its brilliance. O king! At this, Varshneya forcefully grasped and hurled a javelin towards the grandfather's chariot. It was terrible to behold. In that great battle, it was hurled through the force of Varshneya's arms. It advanced with great force, like a fatal night advancing towards a man. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing it suddenly descend, Gangeya used two extremely sharp kshurapra arrows to slice it into two, so that it fell down on the ground. Having severed the javelin, he angrily struck Satyaki on the chest with nine arrows and the destroyer of enemies smiled as he did this. O Pandu's elder brother! The Pandavas surrounded Bhishma in that battle, with their chariots, elephants and horses, so that Madhava³⁸⁷ might be rescued. A tumultuous battle commenced and it made the body hair stand up. In that encounter, both the Pandavas and the Kurus desired victory.”

CHAPTER 961(101)

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! Duryodhana saw that Bhishma was angry in the battle. O great king! He also saw that he was surrounded by the Pandavas, like clouds in the sky surrounding the sun after summer is over. He addressed Duhshasana. ‘This brave and great archer, Bhishma, is the destroyer of enemies. O bull among the Bharata lineage! He has been covered on all sides by the brave Pandavas. O brave one! It is your duty to protect the extremely great-souled one. In this battle, protect Bhishma, our grandfather, so that he can kill the Panchalas and the Pandavas in this encounter. I think that it is our duty to protect Bhishma. Bhishma, the great archer, is our protector and is also our grandfather. With all your soldiers, surround the grandfather. If you protect him, you will perform a difficult task in this battle.’ In the encounter, having been thus addressed, your son, Duhshasana, stationed himself around Bhishma, surrounding him with a

large army. Subala's son had many hundreds and thousands of horses. The riders had polished spears and wielded swords and spikes. They were proud and extremely swift. This was a force with standards. These supreme among men were trained and skilled in battle. They surrounded Nakula, Sahadeva and Pandava Dharmaraja from every direction and repulsed those best of men. King Duryodhana sent ten thousand brave horse-riders to restrain the Pandavas. They penetrated with great force, like Garudas advancing to do battle. O king! The earth was struck with the hooves and trembled because of the sound. A great noise from the hooves of the horses could be heard then. It was like a large forest of bamboos being burnt on a mountain. As they advanced there, a great cloud of dust arose. It rose up into the path of the sun and shrouded the sun. The army of the Pandavas was agitated because of the force of these horses, as if a flock of swans had descended onto a large lake with great force. Nothing could be heard because of the sounds of neighing.

“O great king! In that battle, King Yudhishtira and the Pandavas who were Madri's sons spiritedly checked the force of those horse-riders, like the shoreline checks the forceful waves of the great ocean on the night of the full moon, when the waters are full because of the rains. O king! The rathas used straight-tufted arrows to sever the heads of the horse-riders from their bodies. O great king! They were slain and brought down by those who wielded firm bows. It was like elephants killed by mighty elephants and hurled into mountainous caverns. They³⁸⁸ roamed around in the ten directions and used extremely sharp javelins and straight-tufted arrows to slice off the heads. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The horse-riders were struck by swords. Their heads fell down, like fruit from large trees. O king! Horses and their riders were seen to be slain there. They fell down and were falling down, in hundreds and thousands. Having been thus slaughtered, the horses were overcome by fear and fled. It was like deer trying to protect their lives at the arrival of a lion. O great king! In that great battle, the Pandavas vanquished the enemy. Having driven the enemy away in the battle, they blew on their conch shells and sounded their drums.

“In the midst of the soldiers, Duryodhana was seen to be distressed. O best of the Bharata lineage! He spoke these words to the king of Madra. ‘This eldest son of Pandu has vanquished my maternal uncle. O mighty-armed one! While you have looked on, the powerful one has driven my soldiers away. O mighty-armed one! Repulse him, the way the shoreline beats back the abode of makaras. On account of your strength and valour, you are known to be irresistible.’ Having heard the words of your son, the powerful Shalya advanced with a large number of chariots to the spot where King Yudhishtira was stationed. Shalya suddenly descended with an extremely large force, with the thrust of the great ocean. Pandava countered him in that battle. In that encounter, maharatha Dharmaraja used ten arrows to swiftly strike the king of Madra between the breasts. Nakula and Sahadeva struck him with three arrows that were aimed straight. The king of Madra pierced each of them with three arrows. He again pierced Yudhishtira with sixty sharp arrows. Overcome with anger, he struck the two sons of Madri with two arrows. The mighty-armed Bhima then beheld the king in that battle. He approached the king of Madra, as if advancing into the jaws of death. The vanquisher of enemies advanced to the spot where Yudhishtira was stationed in the battle. An extremely terrible and fearful battle raged. The sun was blazing in the other direction then.”³⁸⁹

CHAPTER 962(102)

‘Sanjaya said, “Your father was enraged. In that battle, he used supreme and sharp arrows to pierce the Parthas and their soldiers in every direction. He pierced Bhima with twelve arrows and Satyaki with nine, Nakula with three arrows and Sahadeva with seven. He struck Yudhishtira with twelve arrows in his chest and arms. The immensely strong one then pierced Dhrishtadyumna and roared. Nakula pierced him with twelve arrows and Madhava³⁹⁰ with three. Dhrishtadyumna pierced the grandfather back with seventy arrows, Bhimasena with five and Yudhishtira with twelve. Having pierced Satyaki, Drona pierced Bhimasena. He pierced each of

them with five sharp arrows that resembled Yama's staff. But each of them pierced the bull among brahmanas back with three arrows that were straight in their aim and were like giant snakes. The Souviras, the Kitavas, those from the east, those from the west, those from the north, the Malavas, the Abhishahas, the Shurasenas, the Shibis and the Vasatayas did not avoid Bhishma in that battle, though they were slaughtered by his sharp arrows. Other great-souled ones on the side of the Pandaveyas were slaughtered. The Pandavas were attacked by those who wielded many weapons in their hands. O king! But the Pandavas still surrounded the grandfather. The invincible one was surrounded on all sides by a large number of chariots. Consuming the enemy, he blazed up like a fire engendered in a deserted forest. His chariot was the source of the fire. The bow, swords, javelins and clubs were the kindling. His arrows were the sparks. Bhishma was himself the fire that consumed the bulls among the kshatriyas. His arrows had golden tufts and the feathers of vultures. They were extremely energetic. He enveloped the enemy force with barbed, hollow and iron arrows. He used sharp arrows to bring down elephants and chariots. That large number of chariots looked like a forest of palm trees with the heads lopped off. O king! In that battle, the mighty-armed one, supreme among all wielders of weapons, deprived chariots, elephants and horses of their riders. The twang of his bow-string and the slapping of his palms were like the clap of thunder. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the beings were agitated and trembled. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Your father's arrows were incapable of being countered. Released from Bhishma's bow, those arrows did not only strike the armour on the bodies. O king! Brave ones were slain on their chariots. O great king! With the swift horses still yoked, we saw them³⁹¹ being dragged around all over the field of battle. There were fourteen thousand maharathas from the Chedis, the Kashis and the Karushas. They were famous, born in noble lineages and were ready to give up their lives. Their standards were decorated with gold and all of them refused to retreat from the field of battle. They clashed against Bhishma in that battle, as if against Death with a gaping mouth. All of them were submerged in the world of the

hereafter, together with their horses, chariots and elephants. O king! We saw hundreds and thousands of chariots. Some had their floors and axles chattered. Others had completely broken wheels. The bumpers of the chariots were fragmented and the charioteers were brought down. O lord of the earth! O venerable one! Arrows, excellent armour, spikes, clubs, maces, swords, arrows with iron heads, the floors of chariots, quivers and wheels were broken and were strewn around. There were arms that still held bows and swords. There were heads with earrings. There were palm-guards and finger-guards and standards that had been brought down. There were bows shattered into many fragments. All these were scattered on the ground. O king! There were elephants with the riders slain and horses devoid of riders. They lay there, in hundreds and thousands. The brave ones³⁹² made every effort to restrain the maharathas who were running away. But they did not succeed, because of the oppression created by Bhishma's arrows. With valour like that of the great Indra, he slaughtered that large army. O great king! It was destroyed in such a way that no two people ran away together. Chariots, elephants and horses were pierced and standards and seats brought down. There was lamentation in the army of the sons of Pandu and they lost their senses. Father killed the son and the son killed the father. Driven by the force of destiny, a friend attacked a beloved friend. Many soldiers in the army of the sons of Pandu tore apart their armour. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! With disheveled hair, they were seen to run away. They were like a herd of cattle, crazy with fear and running around. Chariot-riders, elephants and soldiers in the army of the sons of Pandu were seen to be shrieking in piteous tones.

“On seeing that the army was routed, the descendant of the Yadava lineage controlled the supreme chariot and spoke to Partha Bibhatsu. ‘O Partha! The moment that you have wished for, has now arrived. O tiger among men! Strike and free yourself from this confusion. O brave one! O Partha! Earlier, in the assembly of kings, in Virata's city and in Sanjaya's presence, you said, “I will slay all the soldiers in the army of the sons of Dhritarashtra, with Bhishma and Drona at the forefront. I will kill them and their followers and all those who fight against me in the battle.” O

Kounteya! O destroyer of enemies! Do this and make your words come true. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Remember the dharma of kshatriyas and fight.’ Thus addressed by Vasudeva, Bibhatsu lowered his face and cast a sideways glance. As if unwillingly, he spoke these words. ‘Having killed those who should not be killed, I will obtain the kingdom, with hell as the ultimate objective. Or is it better to suffer the misery of dwelling in the forest? Which will be better for me? Drive the horses towards Bhishma. I will do what you have asked me to. I will bring down the aged and invincible grandfather of the Kurus.’ At this, Madhava urged the horses that had the complexion of silver. O king! He took them to the spot where Bhishma was, difficult to look at, like the sun with its rays. On seeing the mighty-armed Partha ready to fight with Bhishma in that battle, Yudhisthira’s large army returned again. Bhishma, best of the Kuru lineage, roared repeatedly like a lion. He swiftly showered down arrows on Dhananjaya’s chariot. In an instant, because of that great shower of arrows, nothing could be seen of the chariot or the charioteer. However, Vasudeva was without fear. Satvata resorted to patience and goaded the horses, which had been wounded by Bhishma’s arrows. Partha grasped his divine bow that roared like the clouds. He used sharp arrows to sever Bhishma’s bow and made it fall down. With the bow severed, Kouravya again grasped a giant bow. In only an instant, your father strung the bow, which made a sound like that of the clouds. But in his anger, Arjuna sliced down this second bow too. At this, Shantanu’s son praised his dexterity. ‘O Partha! Well done. O mighty-armed one! O Kunti’s son! Well done.’ Having thus addressed him, he grasped another beautiful bow. In that battle, Bhishma released many arrows towards Partha’s chariot. Vasudeva displayed supreme skill in handling the horses. He executed circular motions and avoided all those arrows. Wounded by arrows, Bhishma and Partha, tigers among men, looked beautiful. They were like two angry bulls, marked with the signs of horns.

“Vasudeva saw that Partha was fighting mildly. Bhishma was continuously showering down arrows in the battle. Stationed between the two armies, he was as scorching as the sun. He was killing the best of the

best in the army of Pandu's son. Against Yudhishtira's forces, Bhishma was like the destruction at the end of a yuga. The mighty-armed Madhava, the destroyer of enemy heroes, could not tolerate this. O venerable one! He abandoned Partha's horses, which had the complexion of silver. Full of anger, the great yogi descended from the great chariot. The powerful one advanced towards Bhishma, with his arms as weapons. The spirited one had a whip in his hand and roared repeatedly like a lion. The lord of the universe seemed to make the earth shatter with his footsteps. Krishna's eyes were coppery red with anger. The infinitely radiant one wished to kill him. In the great battle, those on your side lost their senses. They saw Madhava advance against Bhishma in that battle, as if he would swallow him up. 'Bhishma has been slain. Bhishma has been slain.' Such lamentations were uttered by the soldiers. All the men were frightened at the sight of Vasudeva advancing. Janardana was dressed in yellow garments. He was dark blue, like a jewel. As he advanced against Bhishma, he was as beautiful as a cloud with a garland of lightning. It was like a lion advancing on an elephant, or the leader of a herd advancing against another bull. The spirited bull among the Yadava lineage roared and advanced. On seeing Pundarikaksha descend on him in the battle, Bhishma was not frightened. He stretched his great bow in the encounter and addressed Govinda without any fear in his heart. 'O Pundarikaksha! Come. O god of the gods! I bow down before you. O best of the Satvata lineage! Bring me down in this great battle. O god! O unblemished one! Slain by you in this battle, I will obtain supreme welfare in this world and in the next world. O Govinda! In the three worlds, I have obtained great honour in the battle today.' The mighty-armed Partha ran after Keshava and embraced him in his two arms. But despite being grasped by Partha, the lotus-eyed Purushottama Krishna still proceeded with great force, dragging him along. Partha, the destroyer of enemy heroes, now grasped Hrishikesha's legs with force and managed to stop him at the tenth step. His³⁹³ eyes were full of rage and he was sighing like a serpent. Arjuna, the destroyer of enemy heroes, spoke these words of distress to him. 'O mighty-armed one! Refrain. You should not do this. O Keshava! You

earlier said that you would not fight in this war. O Madhava! The world will say that you have uttered a falsehood. Let the entire burden be on me. I will kill the one who is rigid in his vows. O Madhava! If it is otherwise in this battle, let there be a curse on my truth and my good deeds. O destroyer of enemies! I will do everything so that the end of the foes is ensured. Behold. As I wish, I will bring down the invincible one who is great in his vows today, like the full moon at the end of an era.’ Madhava heard these words of the great-souled Phalguna. He did not say anything. But in great rage, he again ascended onto the chariot.

““Those two tigers among men were stationed on the chariot. Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, again showered down arrows, like clouds raining down on a mountain. Your father, Devavrata, took the lives of the warriors, like the rays of the sun absorb energy from everything after winter has passed. Just as the Pandavas had shattered the ranks of the Kurus in battle, your father shattered the ranks of the Pandava soldiers in battle. The soldiers were slain and routed. They lost their enterprise and were bereft of their senses. In that battle, they were incapable of looking at Bhishma. Scorching them with his own energy, he was like the midday sun. They were slain by Bhishma, as if he was Death at the time of the destruction of a yuga. O great king! The Pandavas were afflicted with fear and glanced at him. They could not find a protector, like cattle that had sunk into mire. In the battle, they were like weak ants afflicted by a strong person. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The maharatha was unassailable. He scorched the kings with his arrows. They were incapable of looking at Bhishma. His arrows scorched like the rays of the sun. While the soldiers of the Pandus were routed, the one with the thousand rays³⁹⁴ began to set. The soldiers were overcome by fatigue. Their hearts were set on withdrawing.””

CHAPTER 963(103)

‘Sanjaya said, “While they were still fighting, the sun set. Terrible twilight set in and the field of battle could no longer be seen. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! King Yudhishtira saw that twilight had set in and that

his own soldiers were being slaughtered by Bhishma, the destroyer of enemies. They had discarded their weapons and, surrounded by the enemy, had begun to run away. In the battle, maharatha Bhishma was incited by supreme anger. He saw that the Somakas had been vanquished and that the maharathas were dispirited. He thought for a short while and gave the instructions for withdrawal. King Yudhishtira instructed that the soldiers should be withdrawn. In a similar way, your soldiers were also withdrawn at the same time. O best of the Kurus! Having withdrawn the soldiers, the maharathas entered their camps, having been wounded in the battle. The Pandavas reflected on what should be done vis-à-vis Bhishma in the battle. Oppressed by Bhishma, they could not find any peace. In the battle, Bhishma had vanquished the Pandavas, together with the Srinjayas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He was worshipped by your sons and praised by them. With the delighted Kurus surrounding him in every direction, he entered his camp. It was night and all the beings lost their senses. Towards the beginning of that terrible night, the Pandavas, the Vrishnis and the invincible Srinjayas sat down to have a consultation. All those immensely powerful ones thought that the time had come to consult about what would be beneficial for them. Those wise ones anxiously consulted to determine what would be best.

“O king! King Yudhishtira consulted for a long time. He glanced towards Vasudeva and spoke these words. ‘O Krishna! Behold the great-souled Bhishma, terrible in his valour. He crushes my soldiers like an elephant amidst a clump of lotuses. We do not even have the enterprise to glance at the great-souled one. He is like an expanding fire that is consuming my soldiers. He is like the terrible and great serpent Takshaka, whose venom is virulent. O Krishna! In the battle, the powerful Bhishma uses sharp weapons. He grasps his bow in the encounter and releases sharp arrows. It is possible to vanquish an angry Yama, the king of the gods with the vajra in his hand, Varuna with his noose and the lord of riches with his club. But if he is enraged, it is impossible to defeat Bhishma in a great battle. O Krishna! It is because of this reason that I am immersed in an ocean of grief. Having confronted Bhishma in the battle, I am suffering

from weakness of intelligence. O invincible one! I will go to the forest. It is beneficial that I should go there. O Krishna! I have no desire to fight. Bhishma always kills us. He is like a flaming fire, towards which insects are attracted. I will obtain the same result of death by daring to fight with Bhishma. O Varshneya! Despite being valorous, for the sake of the kingdom, I am being conveyed towards destruction. My brave brothers are sorely afflicted through arrows. It is because of me, and because of affection towards their brother, that they were dislodged from the kingdom. O Madhusudana! Krishna³⁹⁵ was oppressed because of what I had done. I think that being alive has great value. But it is now extremely difficult to remain alive. If I remain alive today, I will spend the remaining part³⁹⁶ in pursuing supreme dharma. O Keshava! If you show your favours towards me and towards my brothers, tell me what I should do. O Keshava! But this should be without contravening my own dharma.’ Krishna heard these words and their detailed description.

“Overcome by compassion, he comforted Yudhishtira and replied, ‘O Dharma’s son! You should not grieve. You are devoted to the truth. Your brave brothers are invincible and are the destroyers of enemies. Arjuna and Bhimasena are as energetic as Vayu and Agni. Madri’s two sons are as valorous as the lord of the thirty gods. O Pandava! For the sake of the good relationship that exists between us, employ me to fight with Bhishma. O king! Instructed by you, there is nothing I will not do in this great battle. While the sons of Dhritarashtra look on, if Phalguna does not desire it, I will challenge Bhishma, the bull among men, in this battle and kill him. O Pandava! If you see that Bhishma’s death will ensure that you win the kingdom, alone on a chariot, I will slay the aged grandfather of the Kurus today. O king! Witness my valour in this battle, like that of the great Indra. I will use great weapons and bring him down from his chariot. There is no doubt that someone who is an enemy to the sons of Pandu is my foe too. My welfare is your welfare. All that is mine is yours. Your brother is my friend, relative³⁹⁷ and disciple. O lord of the earth! For Arjuna’s sake, I can slice off and give my own flesh. This tiger among men will also lay

down his life for my sake. O father!³⁹⁸ This is our understanding, that we will protect each other. O Indra among kings! Employ me, so that I can be your protector. In Upaplavya, Partha earlier took an oath before many people. “I will slay Gangeya.” I should protect the oath that the intelligent Partha took. If Partha gives me permission, there is no doubt that I should perform this task. Or let Phalguna bear this limited burden in battle. Let him kill Bhishma, the destroyer of enemy cities, in battle. If Partha stirs himself, there is nothing that he cannot accomplish in battle, even if the thirty gods have raised their arms against him, together with the daityas and the danavas. O lord of men! They can be killed by Arjuna in battle, not to speak of Bhishma. Bhishma, Shantanu’s immensely valorous son, has now become perverse and has lost his intelligence. He will not live for long. He no longer understands what his duty is.’

“Yudhishtira replied, ‘O mighty-armed one! O Madhava! It is exactly as you have spoken. All of them together are not capable of withstanding your force. O tiger among men! With an immensely strong one like you as my protector, I am always certain of obtaining everything that I desire. O supreme among victorious ones! With Govinda as a protector, I can vanquish the gods, together with Indra, in battle, not to speak of Bhishma in this great battle. But I cannot make your words come false for the sake of glorifying my own objective. O Madhava! As you had promised, help us, but without taking part in the fight. O Madhava! Bhishma had come to an agreement with me. “For your sake, I will proffer advice. But I will never fight for you. O lord! I tell you truthfully that I will fight for Duryodhana’s cause.” O Madhava! He may provide counsel, as to how we can obtain the kingdom. Let all of us go to Devavrata, to ask him about the means whereby he may be killed. O Madhusudana! Together with you, let all of us go and ask him. O supreme among men! Together with you, let all of us quickly go to Bhishma. O Varshneya! If this seems desirable to you, let us go and seek Kourava’s counsel. O Janardana! He will offer us beneficial and truthful advice. O Krishna! In this battle, let us do what he asks us to do. The one who is rigid in his vows will give us counsel and victory. We lost our father when we were children and he reared us. O

Madhava! This is the aged grandfather whom I wish to kill. He is the father of our beloved father. Shame on the livelihood of kshatriyas.””

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! On hearing these words, Varshneya spoke to the descendant of the Kuru lineage. ‘O mighty-armed one! I have always liked whatever you have said. Devavrata Bhishma is accomplished. He can burn down with his glance. Let us go to the one who is the son of the one who goes to the ocean³⁹⁹ to ask about the means of his death. He will certainly speak the truth, especially if he is asked by you. Let us go there, to ask the grandfather of the Kurus.’ ‘O Madhava! Let us bow down our heads and go and ask him for counsel. He will offer us counsel about how we can fight with the enemy.’⁴⁰⁰ O Pandu’s elder brother! Having thus consulted, all the brave Pandavas, together with the valiant Vasudeva, departed. They discarded their weapons and armour and proceeded to Bhishma’s residence. They entered and bowed their heads in obeisance before Bhishma. O great king! O bull among the Bharata lineage! The Pandavas worshipped him. They lowered their heads and sought Bhishma’s protection. The mighty-armed Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, told them, ‘O Varshneya! Welcome. O Dhananjaya! Welcome. O Dharma’s son! O Bhima! O twins! Welcome. What is the task that I can accomplish for you now? What will extend your pleasure? Even if it should prove to be extremely difficult, I will do it with all my heart.’ With affection, Gangeya repeatedly spoke in this way. Yudhishtira, Dharma’s son, was miserable in his soul and spoke these words. ‘O one who is learned in dharma! How will we obtain victory and the kingdom? How can this destruction of subjects be stopped? O lord! Tell us this. You yourself tell us the means whereby we can bring about your own death. O king! How will we be able to withstand you in battle? O grandfather of the Kurus! You do not exhibit the slightest bit of weakness. In the battle, your bow is always seen, whirling around in a circle. No one can distinguish when you affix an arrow, aim or stretch your bow. O mighty-armed one! We see you stationed on your chariot, like the sun. O slayer of enemy heroes! You slaughter men, horses, chariots and elephants. O bull among the Bharata

lineage! Which man is capable of killing you? O supreme among men! You bring down a great shower of arrows. Because of you, my large army is decaying from one day to another. How can we defeat you in battle? How can the kingdom be ours? How can there be peace among my soldiers? O grandfather! Tell us this.’ O Pandu’s elder brother! Shantanu’s son then spoke these words to Pandava. ‘O Kounteya! As long as I am alive in battle, your prosperity will never be seen. I tell you this truthfully. After you have vanquished me in battle, your victory over the Kouravas is certain. If you wish to obtain victory in this battle, strike me down quickly. O Partha! You have my permission to happily strike at me. I think it is good for you that you know my nature.⁴⁰¹ After I have been killed, everyone else will be killed. Therefore, do as I am asking you to.’

“Yudhishtira said, ‘Tell us the means whereby we may defeat you in battle. When you are enraged in battle, you are like Yama with a staff in his hand. It is possible to defeat the wielder of the vajra, or Varuna, or Yama. But you are incapable of being defeated in battle, even by the gods and the asuras, together with Indra.’

“Bhishma replied, ‘O mighty-armed one! O Pandava! What you have said is true. I am incapable of being defeated in battle, even by the gods and the asuras, together with Indra. But this is when I grasp my weapons in battle and grasp my supreme bow. O king! But when I cast aside my weapons, the maharathas can kill me in battle. I do not wish to fight with someone who has cast his weapons aside, someone who has fallen down, someone whose armour and standard have been dislodged, someone who is running away, someone who is frightened, someone who solicits sanctuary, someone who is a woman, someone who bears the name of a woman, someone who is disabled, someone who only has one son, someone who does not have a son and someone who is difficult to look at. O Partha! Hear about the vow that I took a long time ago. I will never fight if I see an inauspicious sign on the standard. O king! This son of Drupada is a maharatha in your army. Shikhandi is a brave and victorious one who always desires to fight. But he was a woman earlier. He became a man later. All of you know everything about how this came about. In the battle,

let the brave Arjuna place Shikhandi ahead of him. Let the armoured one attack me with sharp arrows. I will see an inauspicious sign on the standard then, especially that of someone who was earlier a woman. Even if I have grasped my bow, I will never strike him then. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Let Pandava Dhananjaya then strike me from every side with his arrows. Truly, with the exception of the immensely fortunate Krishna and Pandava Dhananjaya, I do not see anyone in the worlds who is capable of killing me. Therefore, placing him⁴⁰² at the front, let Bibhatsu strive his utmost to bring me down. Victory will be obtained. O Kounteya! Act in accordance with the words I have spoken. You will then be able to defeat the assembled sons of Dhritarashtra in the battle.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “Having taken his permission and having shown their respects to the great-souled Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, the Parthas then returned to their own camp. Gangeya prepared himself for his departure to the next world. Arjuna was tormented by grief and he was overcome with shame. He said, ‘O Madhava! How can I fight with my senior, the aged one of the lineage? He is accomplished in wisdom and intelligence. How can I fight with the grandfather in a battle? O Vasudeva! As a child, I used to play with the great-minded one. O Gada’s elder brother! I used to sully the great-souled one’s garments with the dust on my body, when I used to climb onto his lap as a child. He is the father of my father, the great-souled Pandu. “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I am not your father, but your father’s father.” These are the words he used to tell me in my childhood. How can he be killed by me now? I wish that my soldiers are killed. I cannot fight with that great-souled one. O Krishna! Which do you think is superior, victory or death?’ Krishna replied, ‘O Jishnu! Earlier, you have promised to kill Bhishma in the battle. O Partha! Established in the dharma of kshatriyas, how can you not kill him now? O Partha! Bring him down from his chariot, like a tree that has been struck by lightning. Without killing Gangeya in battle, victory cannot be obtained. This has been determined by destiny earlier. The killing has been ordained by destiny. Bhishma’s killer is an earlier

Indra.⁴⁰³ It cannot but be otherwise. O invincible one! Bhishma is like Death with a gaping mouth. No one other than you is capable of fighting with him, not even the wielder of the vajra himself. O mighty-armed one! Kill Bhishma. Listen to these words of mine. This is what the immensely intelligent Brihaspati told Shakra in earlier times. “O Shakra! One must kill someone who possesses all the qualities, if he comes as an assassin, or if he arrives to kill.” O Dhananjaya! This is the eternal dharma in which kshatriyas have been established. They must fight, protect and perform sacrifices, without any malice.’ Arjuna replied, ‘O Krishna! It is certain that Shikhandi will be the cause of Bhishma’s death. As soon as he sees Panchala, Bhishma will withdraw. Therefore, we will place Shikhandi ahead of all of us. It is my view that this is the means for bringing about Gangeya’s downfall. I will restrain the other great archers with my arrows. Shikhandi will fight with Bhishma, the best of warriors. I have heard from the chief of the Kurus that he will not kill Shikhandi. He was born as a maiden earlier and became a man later.’ Having decided this, the Pandavas, together with Madhava, retired to their own beds. The bulls among men were happy.”

CHAPTER 964(104)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! How did Shikhandi fight with Gangeya in that battle? How did Bhishma advance against the Pandavas? Tell me this.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “The morning was clear and it was time for the sun to rise. Many drums, kettledrums and tambourines were sounded. Conch shells with the complexion of curds were blown in every direction. The Pandava warriors placed Shikhandi at the forefront and marched out. O great king! They constructed a vyuha that was capable of destroying all enemies. O lord of the earth! Shikhandi was stationed at the forefront of all the soldiers. Bhimasena and Dhananjaya protected his wheels. Droupadi’s sons and Subhadra’s valiant son were behind him. Satyaki and maharatha Chekitana protected them. Dhrishtadyumna was behind them,

protected by the Panchalas. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The lord, King Yudhishtira, marched out, together with the twins, roaring like lions. Virata was behind him, surrounded by his soldiers. O great king! Drupada advanced behind him. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The five brothers from Kekaya and the valiant Dhrishtaketu protected the Pandu soldiers from the rear. The Pandavas arranged the large army of soldiers in the form of this vyuha. They advanced in the battle, ready to give up their lives. O king! In that fashion, the Kurus placed the immensely strong Bhishma at the forefront of all their soldiers and advanced against the Pandavas. He was protected by your invincible and extremely strong sons. The great archer, Drona, was behind them, together with his maharatha son. Bhagadatta was behind him, surrounded by a large army of elephants. Kripa and Kritavarma followed Bhagadatta. Sudakshina, the powerful king of Kamboja, was behind them, as were Jayatsena from Magadha, Soubala and Brihadbala. There were many other great archers and kings, with Susharma at the forefront. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They protected your army's rear. From one day to another, Bhishma, Shantanu's son, created a different kind of vyuha for the battle—sometimes it was asura, sometimes it was pishacha, sometimes it was rakshasa.

“O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The battle between those on your side and those of the enemy commenced. O king! They struck each other and extended Yama's kingdom. The Parthas, with Arjuna at their head, placed Shikhandi at the forefront. They advanced against Bhishma in the battle and released many kinds of arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Those on your side were oppressed by Bhima's arrows. They were covered in blood and left for the next world. Nakula, Sahadeva and maharatha Satyaki advanced against your soldiers and afflicted them with energy. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Those on your side were being slain in that battle. They were incapable of resisting the great army of the Pandavas. Your soldiers were slaughtered in every direction. O king! They were oppressed by those maharathas and were seen to run away in different directions. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Those on your side

could not find a protector. They were slaughtered by the sharp arrows of the Pandavas, together with the Srinjayas.”

‘Dhritarashtra said, “On seeing that the army was thus oppressed by the Parthas, what did the valiant Bhishma do, when he became enraged in that battle? O Sanjaya! How did the scorcher of enemies advance against the Pandavas in battle? O Sanjaya! How did he kill the brave Somakas? Tell me this.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O great king! When the soldiers of your sons were oppressed by the Pandavas and the Srinjayas, I will tell you what the grandfather did. O Pandu’s elder brother! The brave Pandavas were delighted. They advanced and began to slaughter your son’s army. O Indra among men! There was a destruction of men, elephants and horses. Bhishma could not tolerate that the enemy was slaying the soldiers in the battle. The great archer attacked the Pandavas, the Panchalas and the Srinjayas. He was invincible and was prepared to give up his own life. O king! He attacked the five supreme maharathas among the Pandavas.⁴⁰⁴ These were the ones who were exerting themselves in the battle and he checked them with his arrows. He used iron arrows, *vatsadantas*⁴⁰⁵ and sharp anjalikas. He was angry and killed many elephants and horses in that battle. O king! That bull among men brought down charioteers from their chariots, horse-riders from the backs of horses, assembled foot soldiers and elephant-riders from the backs of elephants. He terrified the enemy. In that battle, the maharatha Pandavas quickly attacked Bhishma together, like the wielder of the vajra assailed by asuras. He released sharp arrows that were like Shakra’s vajra to the touch. He was seen in every direction, having assumed a terrible form. As he fought in that battle, his bow was always seen whirling around in a circular motion, like Shakra’s giant bow. O lord of the earth! On witnessing his deeds in that battle, your sons were filled with supreme wonder and honoured the grandfather. The Parthas were dispirited at the way your brave father was fighting in the battle. They glanced towards him, like the immortals towards Viprachitti. They could not resist the one who was like death with a gaping mouth.

“On the tenth day of the battle, he began to consume Shikhandi’s array of chariots with his sharp arrows, like the one with the black trails⁴⁰⁶ burns a forest. Shikhandi pierced him between the breasts with three arrows. Bhishma was like an angry and virulent serpent, like the Destroyer who had been created by Death. Having been thus severely pierced, he glanced towards Shikhandi. He was enraged, but was unwilling.⁴⁰⁷ He smiled and said, ‘Whether you desire it or not, I will never fight with you. You are still the Shikhandini⁴⁰⁸ that the creator made.’ On hearing these words, Shikhandi became senseless with anger. In the battle, he licked the corners of his mouth and spoke to Bhishma. ‘O mighty-armed one! I know you to be the destroyer of the kshatriyas. I have heard about your battle with Jamadagni’s son. I have also heard many things about your divine powers. Knowing of your prowess, I wish to fight with you today. O supreme among men! I wish to do what is pleasant for the Pandavas and for my own self. O supreme among men! I wish to fight against you in the battle today. It is certain that I will kill you. I am swearing this truthfully, in front of you. Having heard these words of mine, do what you must do. Whether you wish to strike me or whether you do not, you will not escape with your life. O Bhishma! O victorious one! Take a final look at this world.’ O king! Having said this, he pierced Bhishma with five straight-tufted arrows, having already wounded him with the arrows of his words. On hearing his words, Savyasachi, the scorcher of enemies, thought that the time had come and incited Shikhandi. ‘I will now fight behind you and destroy the enemy with my arrows. Ignited with rage, attack Bhishma, whose valour is terrible. The immensely strong one will not be able to cause you any pain in the battle. O brave one! O mighty-armed one! Therefore, attack Bhishma. O venerable one! If you return without killing Bhishma in battle, the worlds will look at you, and at me, with disrespect. O brave one! Exert yourself in this great battle so that we are not ridiculed. Make endeavours in the battle and repulse the grandfather. Drona, Drona’s son, Kripa, Suyodhana, Chitrasena, Vikarna, Saindhava Jayadratha, Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti, Sudakshina from Kamboja, the brave

Bhagadatta, the maharatha from Magadha, Somadatta's son, the rakshasa who is Rishyashringa's son and is brave in battle, the king of Trigarta and all the other maharathas—I will restrain them in battle, like the shoreline holds back the dwelling place of makaras. I will hold back in battle all the Kurus, together with their soldiers. You strive against the grandfather.””

CHAPTER 965(105)

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “How did Panchala Shikhandi attack the grandfather Gangeya, when he was enraged in battle? He has dharma in his soul and is rigid in his vows. When Shikhandi raised his weapons, who protected the army of the Pandavas? Those maharathas desired victory and acted swiftly when it was the time to act fast. How did the immensely valorous Bhishma, Shantanu's son, fight on the tenth day with the Pandavas and the Srinjayas? I cannot tolerate the thought of Bhishma being overthrown by Shikhandi in battle. Was his⁴⁰⁹ chariot shattered? Did his bow break into fragments?”

‘Sanjaya said, “O bull among the Bharata lineage! When he fought in that battle, Bhishma's bow was not shattered. Nor was his chariot broken. He used straight-tufted arrows to kill the enemies in that encounter. O king! Many hundred and thousand maharathas on your side and large numbers of chariots, elephants and horses, with excellent harnesses, advanced to do battle, placing the grandfather at the forefront. O Kouravya! The victorious one stuck to his vow. Bhishma continuously slaughtered the soldiers of the Parthas. The great archer fought and killed the enemy with his arrows. All the Panchalas, together with the Pandavas, could not resist him. When the tenth day arrived, he scorched the army of the enemy. He released sharp arrows in hundreds and thousands. O Pandu's elder brother! The Pandavas were incapable of defeating Bhishma, the great archer, in battle. He was like Yama with a noose in his hand. O great king! Savyasachi, the scorcher of enemies and the one who was never defeated, arrived at the spot, causing terror among all the rathas. He roared like a lion. He repeatedly drew his bow and released a shower of arrows.

Partha roamed around on the field of battle, like Death. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Those on your side were frightened at the sound. O king! They fled in great fear, like deer because of a lion. On witnessing that Partha was victorious and that your soldiers were oppressed by him, Duryodhana was greatly tormented and spoke to Bhishma. ‘O father!’⁴¹⁰ This son of Pandu is borne by white horses and has Krishna as a charioteer. He is scorching all those on my side, like the one with the black trails in a forest. O Gangeya! Behold. The soldiers are running away in every direction. O foremost among warriors! They are being slaughtered and driven away by Pandava in this battle. They are like a herd of cattle being driven by a herdsman in the forest. O scorcher of enemies! My soldiers are being driven away. They are being shattered by Dhananjaya’s arrows. They are running away, here and there. It is like a herdsman driving away a herd of cattle in the forest. O scorcher of enemies! My soldiers are being driven away in that fashion. They are being shattered through Dhananjaya’s arrows and are fleeing in different directions. The invincible Bhima is driving away my soldiers. Satyaki, Chekitana, the Pandavas who are Madri’s sons and the valiant Abhimanyu are scorching my army. The brave Dhrishtadyumna and rakshasa Ghatotkacha, immensely strong, are impetuously driving away my soldiers. In every way, my soldiers are being slaughtered by those immensely strong ones. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In making them remain in this battle, I do not see any succour other than you, tiger among men and like the gods in your valour. You are my refuge in this oppression. You should swiftly counter them.’ O great king! Thus addressed, your father, Devavrata, thought for some time and made up his mind.

“Shantanu’s son consoled your son. ‘O Duryodhana! O lord of the earth! Be patient and listen to what I have to say to you. O immensely strong one! In earlier times, I had taken a pledge that I would kill ten thousand great-souled kshatriyas every day and would then return from the battle. O bull among the Bharata lineage! For the sake of your welfare, I have carried out the pledge I made to you. I will perform an even greater task in this great battle today. I will sleep after being slain, or I will kill

the Pandavas today. O tiger among men! I will today free myself from the great debt I owe you. O king! You offered me food as my master. I will be slain at the forefront of the army.’ Having spoken these words, the best of the Bharata lineage scattered arrows among the kshatriyas. The invincible one attacked the Pandava army. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Gangeya stationed himself in the midst of the army, like an angry and virulent serpent, and the Pandavas surrounded him. On the tenth day, he exhibited his strength. O king! The descendant of the Kuru lineage killed hundreds and thousands. He sucked out the energy from the best of the Panchalas and the immensely strong princes, like the sun sucking up water with its rays. O great king! The spirited one killed ten thousand elephants and then killed ten thousand horses, with their riders. The best of men killed two hundred thousand foot soldiers. Bhishma was dazzling in that battle, like a flame without smoke. No one among the Pandaveyas was capable of looking at him. He was like the scorching sun, when it is on its northern path. But though they were oppressed, the Pandaveyas, great archers, together with the maharatha Srinjayas, attacked and sought to kill Bhishma. There were many who fought with Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, then. The mighty-armed one looked like a mountain that was occupied by clouds. Your sons surrounded Gangeya from every direction, together with a large army, and the battle raged on.”

CHAPTER 966(106)

‘Sanjaya said, “O king! Arjuna then witnessed Bhishma’s valour in battle. He told Shikhandi, ‘Advance towards the grandfather. You should not exhibit the slightest fear of Bhishma today. I will bring down the supreme of rathas with sharp arrows.’ O bull among the Bharata lineage! Having been thus addressed by Partha and having heard what Partha had said, Shikhandi attacked Gangeya. O king! Having heard what Partha had said, Dhrishtadyumna, and the maharatha who was Subhadra’s son, cheerfully attacked Bhishma. The aged Virata and Drupada and the armoured Kuntibhoja attacked Bhishma, while your son looked on. O lord of the earth! Nakula, Sahadeva, the valorous Dharmaraja and all the other

soldiers attacked Gangeya, having heard what Partha had said. The maharathas on your side united and counter-attacked, according to their capacity and according to their endeavour. Listen. I will describe it. O great king! Chitrasena attacked Chekitana, who was advancing in the battle against Bhishma, like a young tiger attacks a bull. O great king! In the encounter, Dhrishtadyumna had swiftly approached Bhishma and Kritavarma repulsed him. Bhimasena was enraged and wished to kill Bhishma. O great king! Somadatta's son quickly countered him. The brave Nakula released many arrows. Wishing to ensure that Bhishma remained alive, Vikarna repulsed these. Sahadeva was advancing towards Bhishma's chariot. In the battle, Sharadvata Kripa angrily countered him. On seeing that Bhimasena's immensely strong son, the rakshasa who performed cruel deeds, wished to kill Bhishma, Durmukha powerfully attacked him. In the encounter, Rishyashringa's son angrily repulsed Satyaki. O great king! Abhimanyu was advancing towards Bhishma's chariot. O great king! Sudakshina of Kamboja repulsed him. The aged Virata and Drupada, the destroyers of enemies, had united. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Ashvatthama was enraged and repulsed them. The eldest of Pandu's sons wished to kill Bhishma. Bharadvaja's son made efforts in the battle to counter Dharma's son. Arjuna was hastening in the battle, with Shikhandi at the forefront. O great king! He was approaching Bhishma, scorching the ten directions. Duhshasana, the great archer, countered him in the battle. There were other Pandava maharathas who were advancing towards Bhishma in the battle. Other warriors on your side countered their advance.

“Dhrishtadyumna forcefully advanced against the immensely strong Bhishma alone. He repeatedly addressed the soldiers. ‘This Arjuna, the descendant of the Kuru lineage, is advancing against Bhishma in battle. Advance. Do not be frightened. Bhishma will not be able to touch you. When Arjuna fights in a battle, even Vasava loses interest, not to speak of Bhishma. The brave one has lost his spirits in the battle. He has but a short time to live.’ On hearing the words of their commander, the Pandava maharathas cheerfully advanced towards Gangeya's chariot. The bulls

among men on your side cheerfully resisted them, as they advanced in that battle, like a powerful storm. O great king! Maharatha Duhshasana abandoned his fear. He wished to ensure that Bhishma remained alive and attacked Dhananjaya. In that encounter, the brave Pandavas advanced towards Gangeya's chariot and towards your maharatha sons. O lord of the earth! We witnessed a wonderful and colourful incident. Having reached Duhshasana's chariot, Partha was checked. He was restrained, like the shoreline checks the turbulent and great ocean. The angry Pandava was repulsed by your son. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Both of them were the best of rathas and were invincible. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Both of them were radiant and were as handsome as the moon or the sun. Both of them were overcome with anger and wished to kill each other. They clashed in that great battle, like Maya and Shakra in earlier times. O great king! Duhshasana wounded Pandava with three arrows and Vasudeva with twenty. On seeing that Varshneya was wounded, Arjuna was overcome with rage. He pierced Duhshasana with one hundred iron arrows. In the encounter, they penetrated his armour and drank his blood. O best of the Bharata lineage! Duhshasana was angered at this. He pierced Partha in the forehead with five straight-tufted arrows. O great king! With those arrows on his forehead, the supreme of Pandavas was radiant, like Meru's lofty peaks. Pierced by your archer son in the battle, Partha, the great archer, looked like a blossoming kimshuka tree. Thus wounded, Pandava became angry. Extremely angry, he attacked Duhshasana, like Rahu attacking the moon on the night of the new moon or full moon. O lord of the earth! Your son was afflicted by the powerful one. In the battle, he pierced Partha with arrows that were sharpened on stone and tufted with the feathers of herons. The spirited and valorous Partha sliced down his bow. After this, he struck your son with nine arrows. Stationing himself in front of Bhishma, he⁴¹¹ grasped another bow and shot twenty-five arrows at Arjuna's chest and arms. O great king! At this, Pandava, the destroyer of enemies, became angry. He released many arrows that were like Yama's staff. But though they were released by Partha, your son sliced them down before they could reach him. It was wonderful. Your son pierced Partha

with sharp arrows. Partha became wrathful in that battle and fixed arrows to his bow. They were gold-tufted and sharpened on stone and he released them in the encounter. O great king! These penetrated the great-souled one's body, like swans entering a pond. O great king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Your son was afflicted by the great-souled Pandava. He avoided Partha in the battle and swiftly found refuge in Bhishma's chariot. He seemed to be submerged in fathomless waters and Bhishma was like an island. O lord of the earth! Your son was brave and valiant. When he regained consciousness, he again restrained Partha with extremely sharp arrows, like Vritra against Purandara. Though he was pierced by the immensely valorous one, Arjuna was not distressed.'"

CHAPTER 967(107)

'Sanjaya said, "The armoured Satyaki raised his weapons against Bhishma in the battle. The great archer who was Rishyashringa's son repulsed him in the encounter. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage!

Madhava⁴¹² was enraged in the battle and, as if he was smiling, pierced the rakshasa with nine arrows. O king! O Indra among kings! The enraged rakshasa wounded Madhava, the bull among the Shini lineage, with sharp arrows. Madhava, Shini's descendant and the destroyer of enemy heroes, became wrathful in the battle and released a shower of arrows towards the rakshasa. The rakshasa roared like a lion and pierced Satyaki, the mighty-armed one for whom truth was his valour, with sharp arrows. In the battle, Madhava was severely wounded by the rakshasa. But the spirited one resorted to his patience. He laughed and roared. In the encounter, the angry Bhagadatta wounded Madhava with sharp arrows, like a mighty elephant being goaded. Shini's descendant, supreme among rathas, gave up the encounter with the rakshasa. He released straight-tufted arrows towards Pragjyotisha. The king of Pragjyotisha, skilled in the use of his hands, grasped a sharp and broad-headed arrow and sliced down Madhava's giant bow. The destroyer of enemy heroes grasped another one that was even more powerful. In the encounter, he angrily pierced Bhagadatta with sharp

arrows. The great archer was pierced and repeatedly licked the corners of his mouth. He grasped a firm and iron javelin that was decorated with gold and lapis lazuli. It was as terrible as Yama's staff and he hurled this towards Satyaki. It was hurled through the force of his arms. O king! On seeing it suddenly descend in the battle, Satyaki severed it into three fragments with his arrows. It fell down on the ground, like a giant meteor that has lost its brilliance. O lord of the earth! On seeing that the javelin had been destroyed, your son⁴¹³ surrounded Madhava with a large number of chariots. On seeing that maharatha Varshneya had been surrounded, Duryodhana was extremely happy and spoke to all his brothers. 'O Kouravas! Act so that the warrior Satyaki may not escape with his life. Go there with a large number of chariots. If he is killed, I think that the great army of the Pandavas will also be slain.' The maharathas accepted his words and agreed to do this. With Bhishma at the forefront, they began to fight with Shini's descendant.

“Abhimanyu was advancing against Bhishma in the battle. The powerful king of Kamboja restrained him in the encounter. Arjuna's son pierced the king with straight-tufted arrows. O king! He again pierced the king with sixty-four arrows. Wishing to see that Bhishma remained alive, in that encounter, Sudakshina pierced Krishna's son with nine arrows and his charioteer with nine. When those two valorous ones clashed, the encounter was wonderful and great. Shikhandi, the scorcher of enemies, attacked Gangeya. Virata and Drupada, the aged maharathas, rushed forward to battle Bhishma, resisting that large army. Ashvatthama, supreme among rathas, became angry and repulsed them. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! A battle commenced between them. O king! O scorcher of enemies! Virata used ten broad-headed arrows to strike Drona's son, the great archer who was the ornament of any battle. Drupada also used three sharp arrows to pierce him. The preceptor's son stationed himself in front of Bhishma. As the aged Virata and Drupada advanced towards Bhishma, Ashvatthama pierced them with ten arrows. We witnessed the extraordinary and great conduct of those aged ones. In the battle, they repulsed the terrible arrows shot by Drona's son. Sharadvata

Kripa rushed against the advancing Sahadeva, like an angry elephant attacks another elephant in the forest. O king! In that battle, maharatha Kripa quickly struck Madri's son with seventy arrows decorated in gold. But Madri's son used his arrows to slice down his bow into two. Once the bow had been severed, he pierced him with nine arrows. Wishing to ensure that Bhishma remained alive, he⁴¹⁴ grasped another bow that was capable of bearing a great burden. In anger, but cheerfully, he struck Madri's son in that battle with ten sharp arrows. O king! Desiring to kill Bhishma, Pandava was angry and struck back the intolerant one. The battle that raged was terrible and fearful. Wishing to ensure that Bhishma remained alive, Vikarna, the scorcher of enemies, angrily pierced Nakula in that battle with sixty arrows. Nakula was severely wounded by your archer son. But he pierced Vikarna back with seventy-seven arrows that had been sharpened on stone. For the sake of Bhishma, those scorchers of enemies and tigers among men bravely fought against each other, like two bulls fighting in a pen.

“Ghatotkacha was engaged in fighting, slaying your soldiers. For Bhishma's sake, your valiant son, Durmukha, confronted him in battle. O king! But Hidimba's son was enraged. He struck Durmukha, the scorcher of enemies, in the chest with ninety sharp arrows. The brave Durmukha used sixty arrows that were crafted well at the tip to pierce Bhimasena's son and in the forefront of the battle, roared in great delight. Wishing to kill Bhishma, Dhrishtadyumna advanced in the battle. But wishing to ensure that Bhishma remained alive, Hardikya countered him. Varshneya struck the brave Parshata with five iron arrows and again quickly struck him between the breasts with fifty arrows.⁴¹⁵ O king! Parshata struck Hardikya with nine sharp arrows that were decorated with the feathers of herons. For Bhishma's sake, they severely confronted each other in that great battle. They encountered each other like Vritra and the great Indra. The immensely strong Bhimasena advanced against Bhishma. In the battle, Somadatta's son used an extremely sharp and gold-tufted iron arrow to strike Bhima between the breasts. O supreme among kings! With that

stuck to his chest, the powerful Bhimasena looked like Krouncha in earlier times, struck by Skanda's javelin.⁴¹⁶ They angrily attacked each other in that battle and repeatedly released arrows that were like the sun and had been polished by artisans. Wishing to kill Bhishma, Bhima fought with the maharatha who was Somadatta's son. Wishing to ensure Bhishma's victory, Somadatta's son fought with Pandava. They performed tasks and out-performed each other in that battle. O great king! Surrounded by a large army, Yudhishtira advanced towards Bhishma and was countered by Bharadvaja's son. The roar of Drona's chariot was like the sound of the clouds. O king! O venerable one! On hearing it, the Prabhadrakas trembled. O king! In the battle, the great army of Pandu's son was checked by Drona and could not move a single step. O lord of men! Chekitana was enraged in the battle and advanced towards Bhishma. But your son, Chitrasena, repulsed the one who was angry in form. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! For Bhishma's sake, the brave maharatha Chitrasena fought against Chekitana to his utmost capacity. Chekitana also fought against Chitrasena and the battle between the valiant ones was extraordinary. Arjuna was restrained in many different kinds of ways. But he repulsed your son⁴¹⁷ and crushed his soldiers. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Duhshasana resisted Partha to his utmost capacity, having determined that Bhishma could not be killed. The soldiers of your son were slaughtered in the battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They were agitated there by the best of the rathas.”⁴¹⁸

CHAPTER 968(108)

‘Sanjaya said, “The brave and great archer was like a crazy elephant in his valour. He grasped a giant bow that was capable of restraining a crazy elephant. He brandished that best of bows and drove away the maharathas. The maharatha slaughtered the army of the Pandaveyas. The valiant one was skilled in reading portents and glanced in every direction. Having tormented the soldiers, Drona addressed his son. ‘O son! This is the day when maharatha Partha will try his utmost to slay Bhishma in battle. My

arrows are rising up and my bow is outstretched. But when I try to fix my weapons, they are falling off. My mind is without cheer. The peaceful directions have turned terrible and birds and animals are wandering around. Inferior vultures are swooping down towards the army of the Bharatas. The sun has lost its splendour and all the directions have turned red. The earth seems to be suffering and the mounts seem to have been destroyed. Herons, vultures and cranes are repeatedly shrieking. Jackals are howling in inauspicious tones and this signifies a great calamity. Giant meteors are falling down from the centre of the sun's disc. The headless torso of parigha is stationed, covering the sun.⁴¹⁹ The discs of the sun and the moon have become terrible. They signify a terrible danger, pertaining to the mangling of the bodies of kings. In the temples of the Indra among the Kouravas, the gods are trembling, laughing, dancing and weeping. The planets are circling inauspiciously, keeping the moon to the left. O illustrious one! The moon is rising with its crescent inverted. The bodies of the kings seem to be destroyed. Though they are armoured, the soldiers of the sons of Dhritarashtra are no longer radiant. A great sound has arisen amidst both the armies, because of Panchajanya's roar and Gandiva's sound. It is certain that Bibhatsu will use supreme weapons in this battle. He will avoid all the others in the encounter and advance towards the grandfather. The pores in my body are contracting. My mind is weakening. O mighty-armed one! I am thinking about the encounter between Bhishma and Arjuna. Partha is conversant with deceit. He will place the evil-minded Panchala at the forefront of the battle and advance to fight with Bhishma. Bhishma had earlier said that he would not kill Shikhandi. The creator made him a woman and he later became a man through destiny. Yajnasena's maharatha son⁴²⁰ bears an inauspicious mark on his standard. The son of the one who goes to the ocean⁴²¹ will not strike someone who bears an inauspicious mark on his standard. Having thought of all these things, my mind is severely distressed. In the battle today, Partha will attack the aged one of the Kuru lineage. Yudhishtira's anger, the encounter between Bhishma and Arjuna and the rage of my weapons in

battle certainly portend ill for all subjects. Pandava is spirited, powerful and brave. He is skilled in the use of weapons and is firm in his valour. He can shoot from a great distance and can strike powerfully. He is skilled in understanding the signs. He is invincible in battle, even by the gods, with Vasava. He is strong and intelligent. He has conquered exhaustion. He is supreme among warriors. Pandava possesses terrible weapons and is always victorious in battle. Avoid his path and go to the spot where the one who is rigid in his vows is stationed. O mighty-armed one! Behold the visage of what is about to transpire. The armours of the brave ones are decorated with gold. They are expensive and beautiful. They will be shattered with straight-tufted arrows. The tops of the standards, the javelins and the bows will be fragmented. There are polished and sharp spears and lances blazing in gold. There are pennants on elephants and all these will be destroyed by the angry Kiriti. O son! This is not the time when dependents should seek to protect their lives. Go, placing heaven at the forefront, and fame and victory. The whirlpool of horses, elephants and chariots is extremely terrible and is difficult to cross. The one with the ape on his banner is crossing the river of battle on his chariot. Regard for brahmanas, self-control, generosity, austerities and greatness in conduct—these can be seen in the king.⁴²² Dhananjaya is his brother. Bhimasena is powerful and so are the Pandavas who are Madri's sons. Varshneya Vasudeva is stationed as their protector. The evil-minded sons of Dhritarashtra are overcome by anger. While he⁴²³ has scorched his body through austerities, the Bharatas have been scorched through anger. Partha can be seen, with Vasudeva as his refuge. He is shattering all the soldiers of the sons of Dhritarashtra, in every direction. Kiriti can be seen to be agitating the soldiers, like a giant whale agitating large fish at the mouth of a river. Sounds of lamentation and woe can be heard at the head of the army. Go and confront the son of Panchala. I will go and confront Yudhishtira. The centre of the infinitely energetic king's vyuha is difficult to penetrate. It is like the interior of the ocean and atirathas are stationed in every direction. Satyaki, Abhimanyu, Dhristadyumna,

Vrikodara and the twins, lords among men, are protecting the king. He is like Upendra⁴²⁴ and is dark. He is as tall as a giant shala tree. He is advancing amidst the soldiers, like a second Phalguna. Take up your supreme weapons and grasp your giant bow. Advance against King Parshata⁴²⁵ and fight with Vrikodara. Who does not wish that his beloved son may live for an eternal period? However, placing the dharma of kshatriyas at the forefront, I am employing you in this task. In this battle, Bhishma is scorching the great army. O son! In battle, he is the equal of Yama and Varuna.’’’

CHAPTER 969(109)

‘Sanjaya said, ‘Bhagadatta, Kripa, Shalya, Satvata Kritavarma, Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti, Saindhava Jayadratha, Chitrasena, Vikarna and the youthful Durmarshana—these ten warriors from your side fought against Bhimasena. They were accompanied by a large army that had come from many countries. O king! In the battle over Bhishma, they sought great fame. Shalya struck Bhimasena with nine arrows, Kritavarma with three arrows and Kripa with nine arrows. O venerable one! Chitrasena, Vikarna and Bhagadatta struck Bhimasena with ten broad-headed arrows each. Saindhava struck him with three arrows in the joints of his shoulders. Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti struck him with five arrows each. Durmarshana struck Pandava with twenty sharp arrows. O great king! The illustrious one struck all the maharathas from the side of the sons of Dhritarashtra, brave ones in all the worlds, separately. The immensely strong Bhimasena pierced them with many arrows. He pierced Shalya with fifty and Kritavarma with eight. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He severed Kripa’s bow, with an arrow fixed to it, from the middle. After severing the bow, he pierced him with five arrows. He pierced Vinda and Anuvinda with three arrows each, Durmarshana with twenty and Chitrasena with five. Bhima pierced Vikarna with ten arrows and Jayadratha with five. He again struck Saindhava with three arrows and roared in delight. Goutama, supreme among rathas, grasped another bow

and angrily pierced Bhima with ten sharp arrows. He was pierced by those many arrows, like a giant elephant that has been goaded. The mighty-armed and powerful Bhimasena became angry. In that battle, he wounded Goutama with many arrows. As dazzling as Yama at the end of an era, he pierced Saindhava's horses and his charioteer with three arrows and sent them to the land of the dead. With his horses slain, the maharatha quickly jumped down from his chariot. In that battle, he released many sharp arrows towards Bhimasena. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O best of the Bharata lineage! But Bhima used a broad-headed arrow to sever the bow of the great-souled Saindhava into two, from the middle. O king! With his bow severed, bereft of a chariot and with his horses and charioteer slain, he quickly climbed onto Chitrasena's chariot. In the battle there, Pandava performed an extraordinary deed. The maharatha pierced all those maharathas with his arrows and repulsed them. While all the worlds looked on, he deprived Saindhava of his chariot.

“Shalya could not tolerate Bhimasena's valour. He affixed sharp arrows that had been polished by an artisan. Asking Bhima to wait, he pierced him with seventy arrows. O venerable one! In that battle, for Shalya's sake, Kripa, Kritavarma, Bhagadatta, Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti, Chitrasena, Durmarshana, Vikarna and the valiant king of Sindhu, scorchers of enemies, quickly pierced Bhima. He pierced each of them back with five arrows. He pierced Shalya with seventy arrows and yet again with ten. Shalya pierced him with nine arrows and yet again with five. He then used a broad-headed arrow to severely strike his charioteer in his inner organs. On seeing that Vishoka⁴²⁶ had been wounded, the powerful Bhimsena struck the king of Madra in the arms and the chest with three arrows. He pierced each of the other great archers with three arrows each. Having wounded them in that battle, he roared like a lion. Pandava was unassailable in battle. But the great archers made great efforts. Without any hesitation, each of them severely wounded him in the inner organs with three arrows each. But despite being pierced, Bhimasena, the great archer, was not distressed. He was like a mountain on which showers of rain were pouring down from the clouds. The

immensely illustrious one severely pierced Shalya with nine arrows. O king! He firmly pierced Pragjyotisha with one hundred arrows. Using an extremely sharp kshurapra and displaying the dexterity of his hands, he severed the great-souled Satvata's bow, with an arrow fixed to it. O scorcher of enemies! Kritavarma grasped another bow and struck Vrikodara in the midst of his forehead with an iron arrow. In that encounter, Bhima pierced Shalya with nine iron arrows, Bhagadatta with three and Kritavarma with eight. He pierced Goutama and the other rathas with two arrows each. O king! In that encounter, they pierced him back with sharp arrows. He was thus afflicted in every direction by those maharathas. But he disregarded them like straw and roamed around, without any pain. Those best of rathas were not distracted and released hundreds and thousands of sharp arrows towards Bhima.

“The brave maharatha Bhagadatta hurled an immensely forceful javelin in the battle. It was extremely expensive and possessed a golden handle. The strong-armed King Saindhava hurled a spear and a lance. O king! In that encounter, Kripa used a shataghni and Shalya an arrow. The other great archers released five energetic arrows each, in Bhimasena's direction. But the son of the wind god used a kshurapra to slice down the spear. He severed the lance with three arrows, as if it were the stalk of a sesamum plant. He shattered the shataghni with nine arrows that were tufted with the feathers of herons. The immensely strong one sliced down the arrow shot by the king of Madra and severed the javelin that had been suddenly and forcefully hurled by Bhagadatta in the battle. As for the other terrible arrows, he used straight-tufted arrows to strike them down. Bhimasena was proud in battle and struck each of them with three arrows. Each of those great archers was wounded with three arrows. In the great battle, Dhananjaya arrived there. He arrived on his own chariot and beheld maharatha Bhima, striking the enemy warriors in the battle with his arrows. O bull among men! On seeing the two great-souled Pandavas united, all those on your side gave up all hope of victory. In the battle, Arjuna advanced to fight with maharatha Bhishma. Wishing to kill Bhishma, he placed Shikhandi at the forefront. O descendant of the

Bharata lineage! O king! Those ten warriors on your side had been fighting in the battle with Bhima. On seeing them stationed there and wishing to do that which would bring pleasure to Bhima, Bibhatsu attacked them. King Duryodhana incited Susharma for the death of both Arjuna and Bhimasena. ‘O Susharma! Go swiftly, surrounded by your large army. Vanquish the sons of Pandu, Dhananjaya and Vrikodara.’ On hearing this instruction, Trigarta, the lord of Prasthala, attacked the archers Bhima and Arjuna in the battle. He surrounded them with many thousands of chariots in every direction. A battle commenced between Arjuna and the enemy.”

CHAPTER 970(110)

‘Sanjaya said, “In the battle, maharatha Arjuna exerted himself against Shalya. In the encounter, he shrouded him with straight-tufted arrows. He pierced Susharma and Kripa with three arrows each. O Indra among kings! In the battle, he wounded Pragjyotisha, Saindhava Jayadratha, Chitrasena, Vikarna, Kritavarma, Durmarshana and the two maharathas from Avanti with three arrows each. These were swift and were tufted with the feathers of herons and peacocks. In the battle, the atiratha oppressed your army with arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In the encounter, Jayadratha pierced Partha with arrows and while stationed on Chitrasena’s chariot, swiftly pierced Bhima. In the battle, Shalya and Kripa pierced the mighty-armed Jishnu, supreme among rathas, with many arrows that struck at the inner organs. O lord of the earth! O venerable one! In the encounter, your sons, Chitrasena and the others, struck each of them, Arjuna and Bhimasena, with five sharp arrows. But those foremost of rathas, the Kounteyas, bulls among the Bharata lineage, continued to oppress the large army of the Trigartas in the encounter. In the battle, Susharma pierced Partha with many sharp arrows. The powerful one roared and the sound echoed in the sky. Other brave rathas pierced Bhimasena and Dhananjaya with sharp and swift arrows that were tufted with gold. In the midst of those rathas, the Kounteyas, supreme among rathas, looked beautiful as they seemed to be sporting and roamed around in their chariots. They were like powerful lions amidst a herd of cattle.

They shattered the bows and arrows of many brave ones in the battle. They brought down the heads of hundreds of brave kings. They shattered many chariots and killed hundreds of horses. In the great battle, they brought down elephant-riders from their elephants. O king! Many charioteers and riders were seen to be devoid of their lives. O king! They were immobile in every direction. Elephants were slain. Foot soldiers and horses lost their lives. The earth was strewn with many shattered chariots. Many umbrellas and standards were broken and were brought down. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were discarded goads and cushions, diadems, armlets, necklaces, hides of ranku deer and discarded headdresses, whisks and fans. There were severed arms with sandalwood paste smeared on them. The earth was strewn with the thighs of Indras among men.

“We witnessed Partha’s extraordinary valour in the battle. He used his arrows to restrain and strike all the warriors in your army. On seeing that Bhima and Arjuna were united, your son was frightened and quickly rushed towards Gangeya’s chariot, in great fear. Kripa, Kritavarma, Saindhava Jayadratha and Vinda and Anuvinda from Avanti were the ones who did not give up the battle then. In the encounter, Bhima, the great archer, and maharatha Phalguna crushed the army of the Kouravas in terrible fashion. In the encounter, tens of thousands and millions of arrows were quickly showered down on Dhananjaya’s chariot. The maharatha repulsed that net of arrows. In the encounter, Partha began to send them to the land of the dead. Maharatha Shalya became enraged in that battle. As if playing, he struck Jishnu in the chest with a straight-tufted and broad-headed arrow. Partha used five arrows to sever the bow from his hand. He then used other sharp arrows to severely wound him in his inner organs. In the battle, the lord of Madra grasped another bow that was capable of bearing a heavy burden. O great king! He angrily wounded Jishnu with three arrows and Vasudeva with five. He struck Bhimasena in the chest and the arms with nine. O great king! Drona and the maharatha from Magadha were instructed by Duryodhana and came to the spot where Partha and Pandava Bhimasena were. O great king! The maharathas were slaying the great army of the Kouravas. O bull among the Bharata lineage! In the

encounter, the young Jayatsena pierced Bhima, who possessed terrible weapons, with eight sharp arrows. Bhima pierced him back with ten arrows and again with seven. With a broad-headed arrow, he brought down his charioteer from the seat of the chariot. The horses were no longer controlled and fled in different directions, dragging away the king of Magadha, while all the soldiers looked on. Detecting a weakness, Drona pierced Bhimsena with sixty-five extremely sharp iron arrows that had been sharpened on stone. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bhima prided himself in battle. In the encounter, he pierced his preceptor, who was like his father, with nine broad-headed arrows and followed it up with another sixty. Arjuna pierced Susharma with many iron arrows and scattered his soldiers, like the wind dispersing a mass of clouds.

““Bhishma, the king,⁴²⁷ Soubala and Brihadbala angrily attacked Bhimasena and Dhananjaya. The brave Pandavas and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna attacked Bhishma, who was advancing in the battle, like death with a gaping mouth. Shikhandi approached the grandfather of the Bharatas. He was cheerful and had abandoned fear. He attacked the one who was rigid in his vows. The Parthas, headed by Yudhishtira, placed Shikhandi at the forefront. Together with the Srinjayas, they fought against Bhishma in that battle. All those on your side placed the one who was rigid in his vows at the forefront. They fought against the Parthas in that battle, with Shikhandi at the forefront. For the sake of victory over Bhishma, the battle that commenced there among the Kouravas⁴²⁸ was terrible. O lord of the earth! The sons of Pandu wished to triumph over Bhishma and those on your side wished Bhishma’s victory in the battle. It was like gambling with the dice and victory or defeat became the stake. O great king! Dhrishtadyumna incited all the soldiers. ‘O supreme among men! Attack Gangeya. Do not be scared.’ On hearing the words of the commander, the army of the Pandavas quickly advanced against Bhishma. In that great battle, they were ready to give up their lives. O great king! Bhishma, best of rathas, resisted that army as it descended on him, like the shoreline against the great ocean.””

‘Dhritarashtra asked, “O Sanjaya! How did the immensely valorous Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, fight on the tenth day of the battle against the Pandavas and the Srinjayas? How did the Kurus repulse the Pandavas in the battle? Tell me about the great battle fought by Bhishma, the ornament of all battles.”

‘Sanjaya replied, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I will describe to you the battle between the Kurus and the Pandavas and the detailed account of that encounter. Listen. Using his supreme weapons, from one day to another, Kiriti killed the angry charioteers on your side and sent them to the next world. The victorious Kouravya, Bhishma, also stuck to his pledge and always created a great destruction among the army of the Parthas. On seeing Bhishma fight amidst the maharatha Kurus and Arjuna with the Panchalas, people were uncertain.⁴²⁹ On the tenth day, Bhishma and Arjuna encountered each other. There was an extremely dreadful carnage. O king! Bhishma, Shantanu’s son and the scorcher of enemies, skilled in supreme weapons, slaughtered many tens of thousands of warriors. O king! There were many whose families, names and lineages were not known. All of them refused to retreat and the brave ones were slain by Bhishma’s weapons. Having scorched the army of the Pandavas for ten days, the scorcher of enemies, with dharma in his soul, gave up all desire to remain alive. He desired a quick death and stationed himself at the forefront of the battle. ‘I will no longer kill the best of men in the forefront of the battle.’ O great king! Having thought in this way, Devavrata, your mighty-armed father, addressed these words to the Pandava who was near him. ‘O Yudhishthira! O immensely wise one! O one who is knowledgeable in all the sacred texts! O son!⁴³⁰ Listen to my words. They are about attaining dharma and heaven. O son! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I am extremely disgusted with this body of mine. I have spent a lot of time in slaying a large number of beings in battle. Therefore, place Partha at the forefront, with the Panchalas and the Srinjayas. If you wish to do that which brings me pleasure, make

endeavours to kill me.’ Knowing that this was his command, Pandava, who knew about the truth, made efforts to fight against Bhishma in the battle, together with the Srinjayas. O king! On hearing Bhishma’s words, Dhrishtadyumna and Pandava Yudhishtira instructed their army. ‘Advance and fight. Vanquish Bhishma in the battle. You will be protected by Jishnu, who is unwavering in his aim and who is triumphant over enemies. This great archer, Parshata, is the commander. It is certain that Bhimasena will protect you in the battle. There is no need to fear Bhishma. The Srinjayas have no task other than to fight. With Shikhandi at the forefront, there is no doubt that we will obtain victory over Bhishma.’ On the tenth day, the Pandavas took a vow to triumph or to go to Brahma’s world. They advanced, senseless with rage. They placed Shikhandi and Pandava Dhananjaya at the forefront. They resorted to supreme efforts to bring about Bhishma’s downfall.

“‘The kings of many countries were instructed by your son. They were with Drona and his son and with an immensely strong army. The powerful Duhshasana was there, with all his brothers. Bhishma was in the midst of the battle and they sought to protect him. The brave ones on your side placed the one who was rigid in his vows at the forefront. In the battle, they fought with the Parthas, who had placed Shikhandi at the forefront. With Shikhandi at the forefront, the Chedis, the Panchalas and the one with the monkey on his banner advanced towards Bhishma, Shantanu’s son. Drona’s son fought with Shini’s grandson and Dhrishtaketu with Pourava. Yudhamanyu fought with Duryodhana and his advisers, Virata and his soldiers with Jayadratha, the scorcher of enemies and Vriddhakshatra’s heir,⁴³¹ and his soldiers. The great archer, the king of Madra, fought with Yudhishtira and his soldiers. With due protection, Bhimasena advanced against the army of elephants. Drona was invincible and impossible to resist. He was supreme among those who wielded all weapons. Panchala⁴³² and the Somakas advanced against him. Prince Brihadbala had a lion on his standard. He advanced against Subhadra’s son, the scorcher of enemies who had a karnikara flower on his standard.

Together with the kings, your sons attacked Shikhandi and Pandava Dhananjaya in the battle, wishing to kill them.

“Both the armies were valorous and the advance against each other was extremely terrible. As the soldiers advanced, the earth trembled. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The two armies clashed against each other. Both those on your side and those of the enemy were delighted to see Shantanu’s son in the battle. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As they angrily advanced against each other, a terrible sound arose in every direction. There was the sound of conch shells and drums. Elephants trumpeted. The soldiers roared terribly, like lions. All the Indras among men had complexions like that of the sun and the moon. The armlets and diadems the brave ones wore lost their brilliance because of the cloud of dust that was raised. The weapons seemed to be flashes of lightning. The terrible twang of bows could be heard. There was the sound of arrows and conch shells and the great roar of drums. In both the armies, the clatter of the chariots could be heard. There were large numbers of spears, lances, swords and masses of arrows hurled by both the armies, and because of this, the sky lost its lustre. In that great battle, charioteers and riders struck each other. Elephants fought with elephants, infantry with infantry. A great battle raged between the Kurus and the Pandavas for the sake of Bhishma. O tiger among men! It was like hawks fighting over a piece of meat. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There was a terrible encounter between the warriors. They sought to kill each other and defeat each other in that battle.”

CHAPTER 972(112)

‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! Abhimanyu fought against your valiant son, who was supported by a large army for Bhishma’s sake. In the battle, Duryodhana struck Krishna’s son with nine arrows with drooping tufts. He was enraged in the battle and again struck him with three arrows. In that encounter, Krishna’s son angrily hurled a javelin towards Duryodhana’s chariot. It was terrible and seemed to have been created by Death itself. O lord of the earth! On seeing it suddenly descend, dreadful in form, your

maharatha son severed it into two with a kshurapra. On seeing the javelin fall down, Krishna's son became extremely enraged. He struck Duryodhana in the arms and the chest with three arrows. O best of the Bharata lineage! He again struck the king, the intolerant Duryodhana, between the breasts with ten terrible arrows. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The battle between the two was dreadful and wonderful. It created pleasure among those who witnessed it and was applauded by all the kings. For the sake of Bhishma's death and Partha's victory, those brave ones, Subhadra's son and the bull among the Kurus, fought in that battle.

“Drona's son, bull among the brahmanas, was enraged in the battle. The scorcher of enemies struck Satyaki in the chest with an iron arrow. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Shini's descendant, immeasurable in his soul, struck the preceptor's son in all of his inner organs with nine arrows shafted with the feathers of herons. In the encounter, Ashvatthama struck Satyaki with nine arrows and again wounded him in the arms and the chest with thirty. Having been thus pierced by Drona's son, the immensely illustrious and great archer from the Satvata lineage pierced Drona's son back with three arrows.

“In the battle, maharatha Pourava covered Dhrishtaketu with arrows and severely wounded the great archer. However, the extremely strong maharatha, Dhrishtaketu, pierced Pourava in the encounter with thirty sharp arrows. Maharatha Pourava severed Dhrishtaketu's bow and having pierced him with sharp arrows, emitted a powerful roar. O great king! He grasped another bow and pierced Pourava with seventy-three sharp arrows that had been whetted on stone. Those two noble maharathas who were great archers rained down a great shower of arrows towards each other. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They severed each other's bows and slew each other's horses. Bereft of their chariots, the maharathas began to fight with each other with swords. Each had a beautiful shield made out of the hide of a bull, decorated with the signs of one hundred moons and marked with the signs of one hundred stars. O king! They grasped extremely brilliant and polished swords and rushed towards each other. They were like lions in the great forest, wishing to have intercourse with

the same female. They circled in wonderful motions, advanced and retreated. They exhibited their movements, wishing to strike each other. Incited with rage, Pourava asked Dhrishtaketu to wait and struck him on his frontal bone with the large sword. In the encounter, the king of Chedi⁴³³ struck Pourava, bull among men, on the shoulder joint with the sharp tip of his giant sword. O great king! Those destroyers of enemies advanced against each other in the great battle. They struck each other with great force and both of them fell down. O king! Your son, Jayatsena, took Pourava up on his own chariot and carried him away from the field of battle. O king! In the encounter, the powerful Sahadeva, Madri's son and the scorcher of enemies, carried Dhrishtaketu away from the battle.

“Chitrasena pierced Susharma with nine swift arrows.⁴³⁴ He again pierced him with sixty and yet again with nine arrows. O lord of the earth! In that battle, Susharma became enraged with your son and pierced him with one hundred sharp arrows. O king! Chitrasena became angry in the battle and pierced him with thirty arrows with drooping tufts and was pierced back in return.

“O king! In the battle over Bhishma, which increased fame and honour, Subhadra's son fought with Prince Brihadbala. The king of Kosala pierced Arjuna's son with five iron arrows and again pierced him with twenty straight-tufted arrows. Subhadra's son pierced Brihadbala with nine iron arrows. But despite piercing him again and again, he could not make him waver in the battle. Phalguna's son then severed the bow of the king of Kosala and wounded him with thirty arrows that were tufted with the feathers of herons. But Prince Brihadbala grasped another bow and in that battle, angrily pierced Phalguna's son with many arrows. O scorcher of enemies! They fought this battle for Bhishma's sake. O great king! In that battle, those wonderful fighters were excited with anger and were like Maya and Vasava in the battle between the gods and the asuras.

“Bhimasena fought against that army of elephants. He was as resplendent as Shakra, with the vajra in his hand, after shattering mountains. Bhima killed elephants that were like mountains. They fell

down in large numbers, making the earth resound with their roars. Those shattered elephants were like large mountains made out of collyrium. They were strewn over the ground, like shattered mountains.

““In the battle, the great archer, Yudhishtira, fought with the king of Madra. He was protected by a large army and oppressed him. In that encounter for the sake of Bhishma, the valiant king of Madra was enraged and afflicted the maharatha who was Dharma’s son.

““The king of Sindhu pierced Virata with nine straight-tufted and sharp arrows and again wounded him with another thirty. O great king! In the forefront of that battle, Virata struck Saindhava between the breasts with thirty sharp arrows. Matsya and Saindhava possessed colourful bows and swords. Their armour, weapons and standards were handsome. They looked handsome and resplendent in that battle.

““Drona advanced against the son of Panchala⁴³⁵ in the great battle and used straight-tufted arrows in the great clash. O great king! Drona severed Parshata’s giant bow and wounded Parshata with fifty arrows. But Parshata, the destroyer of enemy heroes, grasped another bow and in that encounter, fiercely unleashed arrows at Drona. The maharatha repulsed those arrows with his own shower of arrows. Drona released five arrows towards Drupada’s son. O great king! Parshata, the destroyer of enemy heroes, became enraged at this. In the battle, he hurled a club towards Drona and it was like Yama’s staff, decorated with golden garments. On seeing it suddenly descend towards him in that battle, Drona countered it with fifty arrows. O king! Because of the unassailable arrows released by Drona, it shattered into many fragments. Shattered and fragmented, it fell down on the ground. On seeing the club destroyed, Parshata, the destroyer of enemies, hurled a javelin towards Drona. It was beautiful and was completely made out of iron. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that battle, Drona sliced it down with nine arrows. In that encounter, he afflicted Parshata, the great archer. In this fashion, there was a great battle between Drona and Parshata. O great king! It was fearful and dreadful and was fought over Bhishma.

“Arjuna approached Gangeya and oppressed him with sharp arrows. He angrily advanced against him, like a crazy elephant attacking another in the forest. The powerful and immensely strong Bhagadatta counter-attacked Partha on a crazy elephant that had musth flowing down three streams. On seeing it suddenly descend towards him, like the great Indra’s elephant, Bibhatsu took the greatest care in repulsing it. In that encounter, the powerful King Bhagadatta was astride an elephant and countered Arjuna with a shower of arrows. In the great encounter, Arjuna used extremely sharp and polished arrows that had the complexion of silver to pierce the elephant in battle. O great king! Kounteya kept addressing Shikhandi. ‘Proceed. Proceed. Go towards Bhishma. Kill him.’ O Pandu’s elder brother! O king! Pragjyotisha abandoned Pandava and quickly went towards Drupada’s chariot. O great king! Placing Shikhandi at the forefront, Arjuna advanced against Bhishma and in that battle, an encounter commenced, when the brave ones on your side fiercely attacked Pandava. All of them advanced, roaring in rage, and it was extraordinary. O lord of men! There were many divisions in the army of your sons. Arjuna scattered them, like the wind disperses a mass of clouds in the sky. Shikhandi approached the grandfather of the Bharatas. Quickly and eagerly, he pierced him with many arrows.

“In the battle, Bhishma killed the Somakas who were following Partha. He repulsed the soldiers of the maharatha Pandava. The chariot was the storehouse for the fire. The bow constituted the flames. The javelins and clubs were the kindling. He released a great shower of flaming arrows and consumed the kshatriyas in the battle. He was like a large fire that consumes deadwood when it moves around, driven by the wind. Bhishma blazed like that, showering his divine weapons. There were gold-shafted, straight-tufted and sharp arrows. The immensely illustrious Bhishma roared in the directions and the sub-directions. O king! He brought down chariots and elephants, with their riders. The chariots roamed around, like palm trees that had been shorn of their tops. O king! In that battle, chariots, elephants and horses were bereft of men. Bhishma, supreme among those who wield all weapons, roamed around. The clap of his palms

and the twang of his bow were like the clapping of thunder. O king! In every direction, the soldiers were disturbed and trembled. O lord of men! The arrows of your father were invincible. The unassailable arrows released by Bhishma never failed to penetrate the bodies. O king! The chariots had no men. But they were still yoked to swift horses. O lord of the earth! With the speed of the wind, we saw them being dragged around in different directions. There were fourteen thousand famous maharathas from the Chedis, the Kashis and the Karushas. They were born in noble lineages and were ready to give up their lives. These brave ones did not retreat from battle. Their standards were decorated in gold. With their horses, chariots and elephants, they advanced in battle against Bhishma and confronting the one who was like death with a gaping mouth, they left for the other world. O great king! There was not a single maharatha among the Somakas, who having approached Bhishma in that battle, returned alive from the engagement. In that battle, he sent all those warriors to the capital of the king of the dead. On seeing them conveyed there, all the people witnessed Bhishma's valour.

“The only exceptions were Pandu's brave son, borne on white horses and with Krishna as his charioteer, and Panchala Shikhandi, who was infinitely energetic in battle. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Shikhandi approached Bhishma in that battle and in that great encounter, struck him with one hundred arrows. Gangeya glanced at Shikhandi with anger blazing in his eyes. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He seemed to burn him down with the look in his eyes. O king! But while all the world looked on, he remembered that he was a woman. Bhishma did not strike him in battle, though he⁴³⁶ did not understand the reason. O great king! Arjuna addressed Shikhandi. ‘Advance quickly and kill the grandfather. O brave one! What do you wish to say? Kill maharatha Bhishma. I do not see anyone else in Yudhishtira's army who can kill him. Nor is there anyone who can fight with grandfather Bhishma in this battle. You are the exception. O tiger among men! I am telling this truthfully.’ O bull among the Bharata lineage! Having been thus addressed by Partha, Shikhandi quickly pierced the grandfather with many kinds of arrows. Your father,

Devavrata, paid no heed to these arrows. Enraged in the battle, he countered Arjuna with arrows. O venerable one! In that encounter, he released sharp arrows and dispatched all the soldiers of the maharatha Pandava to the other world. O king! Supported by their large army, the Pandavas surrounded Bhishma and enveloped him, like clouds around the sun. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The descendant of the Bharata lineage was covered in every direction. In that battle, he consumed the enemy, like a flaming fire burns down a forest.

“We then beheld the extraordinary manliness of your son. So as to protect the one who was rigid in his vows, he fought with Partha. All the worlds were gratified at the deeds of your great-souled archer son, Duhshasana, in that battle. In that battle, he alone fought with Partha and his followers and fought so fiercely that the Pandavas were unable to resist him. O great king! In that encounter, Duhshasana deprived rathas of their chariots and tuskers of their riders. He shattered them with sharp arrows and brought them down on the ground. With other arrows, he drove the tuskers away in different directions. He was like a fire that has obtained kindling and blazes with fierce flames. In that way, your son blazed and consumed the Pandavas. No Pandava maharatha could defeat the noble one of the Bharata lineage. Nor did anyone venture against him. The only exception was the great Indra’s son, borne on white steeds and with Krishna as his charioteer. O king! Vijaya Arjuna defeated him in that encounter. While all the soldiers looked on, he then advanced against Bhishma. Though he had been vanquished, your son resorted to the strength of Bhishma’s arms. O king! Intoxicated in that battle, he repeatedly comforted his side and continued to fight resplendently against Arjuna. O king! In that battle, Shikhandi pierced the grandfather with arrows that were like the vajra to the touch and were like the poison of serpents. O lord of men! But these did not cause your father any pain. Gangeya received all these arrows with a smile, like a man suffering from heat craves the pouring down of rain. In that fashion, Gangeya received the shower of arrows from Shikhandi. O great king! As Bhishma consumed

the soldiers of the great-souled Pandavas, the kshatriyas saw his terrible visage in that battle.

“O venerable one! Your son⁴³⁷ spoke to all the soldiers. ‘Attack Phalgunas in the battle and surround him with chariots from all sides. Bhishma is knowledgeable about dharma and will protect all of us in this battle. Give up your great fear and counter-attack the Pandavas. There is the blazing palm tree.⁴³⁸ Bhishma is stationed there and is protecting us, and the honour and the armour of all the sons of Dhritarashtra in this battle. Even if the thirty gods endeavour, they cannot assail Bhishma, not to speak of the great-souled Partha and his soldiers. They are mortal beings. O warriors! Therefore, do not run away. We have obtained Phalgunas in this battle. I will endeavour to fight against Phalgunas in the battle today, together with all of you. O lords of the earth! Make efforts.’ O king! On hearing the words of your archer son, the powerful maharathas united against Arjuna—Videhas, Kalingas and large numbers of Dasherakas. With the Nishadas and the Souviras, the Bahlikas, the Daradas, those from the east, those from the west, the Malavas, the Abhishahas, the Shurasenas, the Shibis, the Vasatayas, the Shalvas, the Shrayas, the Trigartas, the Ambashthas and the Kekayas advanced in the great battle. They attacked Partha in the encounter, like insects drawn to a fire. O great king! The maharathas were with all their armies. Dhananjaya invoked and affixed divine weapons. Bibhatsu, the immensely strong one, quickly released those extremely forceful weapons and consumed them with his arrows, like a fire before insects. The one with the firm bow created thousands of arrows. Gandiva was seen to be blazing in the sky. O great king! Oppressed by those arrows, the chariots and the standards were shattered. The kings could not approach the one with the monkey on his banner. Rathas were brought down with their standards, horses with their riders, elephants with elephant-riders. They were afflicted by Kiriti’s arrows, created through Arjuna’s arms. The earth was strewn in all directions with the many forces of the kings, which were running away. The mighty-armed Partha drove away those armies.

“In that encounter, he then dispatched arrows towards Duhshasana. They possessed iron heads and they pierced your son, Duhshasana. All of them then entered the ground, like snakes penetrating a termite hill. He killed his horses and brought down his charioteer. The lord used twenty arrows to deprive Vivimshati of his chariot. He severely wounded him with five arrows with drooping tufts. He pierced Kripa, Shalya and Vikarna with many iron arrows. Kounteya, borne on white steeds, deprived them of their chariots. O venerable one! Having been deprived of their chariots and having been vanquished in battle by Savyasachi, these five—Kripa, Shalya, Duhshasana, Vikarna and Vivimshati—fled. O king! Having defeated those maharathas in the forenoon, Partha blazed in the battle, like a fire without any smoke. He showered down arrows, like the rays of the sun. O great king! He brought down many other kings. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Because of that shower of arrows, the maharathas retreated from the field of battle and a great river of blood began to flow between the armies of the Kurus and the Pandavas. Elephants, horses and large numbers of rathas were slain by the rathas. Rathas killed elephants and elephants killed horses and infantry. Bodies were sliced in the middle and heads lopped off. Elephants, horses, chariots and warriors fell down in all directions. The shattered bodies were still radiant with expensive earrings and armlets. Princes and maharathas fell down, or were falling down. Some were mangled by the wheels of chariots, others were trod on by elephants and horses. Foot soldiers, horses, horses with horse-riders, elephants, horses and masses of chariots were seen to fall down in every direction. The earth was littered with broken chariots and shattered wheels, yokes and standards. The masses of elephants, horses and chariots were covered with blood. It looked as beautiful as an autumn sky covered with red clouds. Dogs, crows, vultures, wolves, jackals and other dreadful animals and birds howled at the sight of the feast of flesh. Many kinds of winds were seen to blow in all the directions. Rakshasas and demons were seen to be roaring. Golden ropes and expensive flags were seen to be covered in smoke, suddenly stirred by the wind. There were thousands of white umbrellas and pennants of the maharathas. They were seen to be

scattered around in hundreds and thousands. Elephants were afflicted by arrows and fled in all directions, with their standards. O Indra among men! Kshatriyas, holding clubs, javelins and bows, were seen to have fallen down on the ground.

“O great king! Bhishma used a divine weapon and in the sight of all the archers, advanced against Kounteya. In the battle, the armoured Shikhandi also endeavoured to attack. At this, Bhishma withdrew that weapon, which was like the fire. At this time, Kounteya, borne on white horses, confounded the grandfather and killed your soldiers.”

CHAPTER 973(113)

‘Sanjaya said, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There were many in the ranks of both the sides and they were arrayed in vyuhas. All of them advanced, aspiring to attain Brahma’s world. In the encounter that followed, similar types of soldiers did not fight. Rathas did not fight with rathas, nor foot soldiers with foot soldiers. Horses did not fight with horses, nor elephants with warriors on elephants. In that great and dreadful clash between the armies, there were perversions. There were men, elephants and chariots scattered all over the place. In that great and terrible destruction, there was no discrimination.

“O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Shalya, Kripa, Chitrasena, Duhshasana and Vikarna quickly resorted to their chariots. Those brave ones made the standards of the Pandavas tremble in the battle. In the encounter, the soldiers of the Pandus were slaughtered by those great-souled ones. They could not find a protector and were like a boat submerged in the water. Just as the winter strikes the inner organs of cattle, like that, Bhishma wounded the inner organs of the sons of Pandu. The great-souled Partha did likewise towards your soldiers. Many elephants that were like mountains or clouds were brought down. Partha was also seen to bring down leaders among men. He struck them with thousands of iron arrows. The great elephants were seen to fall down there, shrieking piteously. Great-souled ones were killed, their bodies still adorned with ornaments. There were beautiful and scattered heads, still

wearing earrings. O king! That extremely terrible encounter was destructive of the supreme among brave ones. Bhishma fought with the valiant Pandava Dhananjaya. O king! On witnessing the valour with which the grandfather fought, the Kouravas placed Brahma's world at the forefront and did not retreat. They wished to be killed in battle, so that they might attain heaven. The Pandavas did not retreat from that destruction of the supreme among brave ones either. O great king! O lord of men! The Pandavas remembered the many and varied hardships that they had to suffer earlier on account of you and your son. The brave ones abandoned fear in that battle and placed Brahma's world at the forefront. They cheerfully fought with your sons and those on your side.

“In the battle, the maharatha commander⁴³⁹ addressed the soldiers. ‘O Somakas! Together with the Srinjayas, attack Gangeya.’ On hearing the words of the commander, the Somakas, together with the Srinjayas, attacked Gangeya and showered down weapons on him from every direction. O king! Thus assailed, your father, Shantanu's son, became intolerant and started to fight with the Srinjayas. O father!⁴⁴⁰ His achievements were glorious. In earlier times, the intelligent Rama⁴⁴¹ had imparted an instruction of weapons to him, one that could destroy the armies of enemies. He resorted to that instruction, capable of destroying the forces of the enemy. The aged grandfather of the Kurus, Bhishma, slew ten thousand of enemy heroes from the ranks of the Parthas every day. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But with the tenth day having been reached, Bhishma alone slew seven maharathas from the Matsyas and the Panchalas in the encounter and killed innumerable elephants and horses. In the great battle, the great-grandfather killed five thousand rathas and fourteen thousand men. He again killed one thousand elephants and ten thousand horses. O lord of the earth! Your father killed them through the strength of his instruction. He agitated the ranks of all the kings and brought down Virata's beloved brother, Shatanika. O great king! Having killed Shatanika in the battle the powerful Bhishma brought down another one thousand kings with broad-headed arrows. In the army of the Parthas,

there were kings who had followed Dhananjaya. Whichever one among these approached Bhishma was sent to Yama's abode. In this way, Bhishma remained at the head of the army and surpassed the soldiers of the Parthas. He covered them and all the ten directions, with his net of arrows. He performed extremely great deeds on the tenth day. With the bow and arrows, he was stationed between the two armies. O king! None of the kings were capable of glancing at him. He was like the scorching midday sun in the sky, during the summer. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Just as Shakra scorched the army of the daityas in battle, Bhishma scorched that of the Pandaveyas.

“On witnessing his valour, Madhusudana, the son of Devaki, affectionately spoke these words to Dhananjaya. ‘This Bhishma, Shantanu's son, is stationed between the two armies. Kill him with your power and become victorious. He is shattering our soldiers there. Go and use your strength to repulse him there. O lord! No one other than you is capable of withstanding Bhishma's arrows.’ O king! The one with the monkey on his banner was incited at that moment. He used his arrows to make Bhishma, his standard, his chariot and his horses disappear. But the bull, the foremost among the Kurus countered Pandava's arrows with his own torrent of arrows and dispersed the many showers of arrows that had been targeted towards him. O great king! The valiant Dhrishtaketu, the king of Panchala, Pandava Bhimasena, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, the twins, Chekitana, the five from Kekaya, Satyaki, Subhadra's son, Ghatotkacha, Droupadi's sons, Shikhandi, the brave Kuntibhoja, Susharma,⁴⁴² Virata and many other immensely strong ones among the Pandaveyas were oppressed by Bhishma's arrows and were immersed in an ocean of grief. Phalguna rescued them. With great force, Shikhandi grasped a supreme weapon. Protected by Kiriti, he dashed towards Bhishma. Knowing what must be done in the battle, the victorious Bibhatsu killed all the followers⁴⁴³ and himself rushed against Bhishma. Satyaki, Chekitana, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, Virata, Drupada and the Pandavas who were Madri's sons also attacked Bhishma, protected by the

one whose bow was firm. In that battle, Abhimanyu and Droupadi's five sons also attacked Bhishma in the encounter, holding up great weapons. All of them were firm in wielding the bow and never ran away from the field of battle. They pierced Bhishma with well-aimed arrows all over his body. However, the one whose soul was never distressed disregarded all those arrows released by the best of kings. He penetrated the Pandava army. As if smiling, the grandfather repulsed all those arrows. Bhishma smiled repeatedly at Panchala Shikhandi and remembering that he had been a woman, did not target a single arrow at him. But he killed seven maharathas from Drupada's army of rathas. Cries of lamentation then arose among the Matsyas, the Panchalas and the Chedis, all of whom had attacked the solitary one. With supreme horses, a cluster of chariots, elephants and foot soldiers, they enveloped the solitary one, like clouds around the sun. Bhishma, the son of Bhagirathi, scorched many enemies in that battle. There was a battle between Bhishma and Kiriti, who placed Shikhandi at the forefront, there, like that between the gods and the asuras.”

CHAPTER 974(114)

‘Sanjaya said, “All the Pandavas placed Shikhandi at the head. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In that encounter, they surrounded Bhishma from all sides and wounded him, using extremely terrible shataghnis, javelins, battleaxes, clubs, maces, spears, many types of catapults, gold-tufted arrows, spikes, lances, kampanas, iron arrows, vatsadantas and slings. Together with all the Srinjayas, they assailed Bhishma. His armour was shattered and he was oppressed everywhere, in many ways. But despite having been pierced in his inner organs, Gangeya was not distressed. The radiant bow and arrows and weapons seemed to be like the flames of a fire, fanned by the wind. The roar of the wheels of his chariot was the heat. His great weapons constituted the fire itself. His colourful bow was extremely resplendent and the one with the great bow was the destroyer of brave ones. Bhishma was like the fire at the end of a yuga, traversing through the enemy. He passed and brought down masses

of chariots in that battle. He was again seen, roaming around in the midst of those kings among men. He ignored the king of Panchala and Dhrishtaketu and forcibly penetrated into the midst of the Pandava army. He pierced Satyaki, Bhima, Pandava Dhananjaya, Drupada, Virata and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna with extremely forceful arrows that could penetrate the armour of enemies. These six were struck with arrows that made a terrible roar and were as radiant as the sun. However, the maharathas repulsed those sharp arrows. Each of them struck Bhishma with great energy, using ten arrows each. In that battle, Shikhandi released arrows towards the one who was great in his vows. These were gold-tufted and sharpened on stone and swiftly penetrated Bhishma. Placing Shikhandi at the forefront, Kiriti impetuously attacked Bhishma and severed his bow. When Bhishma's bow was sliced down, the maharathas—Drona, Kritavarma, Saindhava Jayadratha, Bhurishrava, Shala, Shalya and Bhagadatta could not tolerate this. Extremely enraged, these seven attacked Kiriti. The maharathas displayed supreme and divine weapons. They attacked in great anger and enveloped Pandava. As they advanced towards Phalguna, sounds could be heard. It was like the sound being raised by the oceans at the time of the destruction of a yuga. 'Bring forward.⁴⁴⁴ Grasp. Fight. Slice off.' Such were the tumultuous sounds as they advanced towards Phalguna's chariot. O bull among the Bharata lineage! On hearing that dreadful sound, the Pandava maharathas attacked, so as to protect Phalguna. Satyaki, Bhimasena, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna, Virata, Drupada, rakshasa Ghatotkacha and Abhimanyu—these seven were enraged and became senseless with anger. They wielded colourful bows and swiftly advanced. The battle that commenced was dreadful and made the body hair stand up. O best of the Bharata lineage! It was like the battle between the gods and the danavas.

“Kiriti, best among rathas, was protected by Krishna and in that battle, after Bhishma's bow had been severed, pierced him with ten arrows. He struck down his charioteer with ten and his standard with one. Gangeya grasped a bow that was more powerful. However, Phalguna sliced that down with a sharp and broad-headed arrow. Pandava was enraged and one

after another, Savyasachi, the scorcher of enemies, severed every bow that Bhishma took up. When the bows were severed, he⁴⁴⁵ became wrathful and licked the corners of his mouth. In great wrath, he grasped a javelin that was capable of shattering mountains. In anger, he hurled this towards Phalguna's chariot. On seeing it descend, like the flaming vajra, the descendant of the Pandava lineage brought the javelin down with five sharp and broad-headed arrows. O best of the Bharata lineage! When that javelin, hurled angrily by Bhishma's powerful arms, was severed with five arrows by the enraged Kiriti, it was shattered and fell down on the ground, like lightning⁴⁴⁶ dislodged from a mass of clouds. On seeing that the javelin had fallen down, Bhishma was overcome with anger. In the battle, the brave and intelligent one, the destroyer of the cities of enemies, began to think. 'I am capable of slaying all the Pandavas with a single bow, had the immensely strong Vishvaksena⁴⁴⁷ not been their protector now. There are two reasons for me not to fight with the Pandavas—the Pandus cannot be killed⁴⁴⁸ and Shikhandi's femininity. In earlier times, when my father married Kali,⁴⁴⁹ my father was satisfied and granted me the boon that I would be invincible in battle, except when I decided to die myself. I think the time has come for me to decide on my death.' On learning that this was the decision of the infinitely energetic Bhishma, the rishis and the Vasus, who were stationed in the sky, spoke these words to Bhishma. 'O brave one! We are extremely delighted with the decision you have taken. O great archer! Act in accordance with your decision and withdraw from the battle.' When those words were spoken, an auspicious and fragrant breeze began to blow. In all the directions, it was moistened with drops of water that smelt nice. The drums of the gods were sounded with a great roar. O king! A shower of flowers fell down on Bhishma. O king! But the words spoken were not heard by anyone there, with the exception of the mighty-armed Bhishma and me, because of the energetic sage.⁴⁵⁰ O lord of the earth! There was great agitation among the thirty gods, at the prospect of Bhishma, beloved of all the worlds, falling down from his chariot.

“Having heard the words of the masses of gods, the great-minded one, Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, dashed towards Bibhatsu, though he had been pierced by sharp arrows that were capable of penetrating every kind of armour. O great king! Shikhandi angrily struck the grandfather of the Bharatas in the chest with nine sharp arrows. In the battle, Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, was wounded by him. O great king! But he did not tremble and was like a mountain during an earthquake. Bibhatsu laughed and drew back the Gandiva bow. He pierced Gangeya with twenty-five kshurapras. Dhananjaya was enraged and again swiftly struck him all over the body with one hundred arrows that penetrated all his inner organs. In the great battle, the others also wounded him severely. But these gold-tufted arrows, sharpened on stone, did not cause him the slightest bit of pain. Placing Shikhandi at the forefront, the wrathful Kiriti attacked Bhishma and severed his bow once again.⁴⁵¹ He pierced him with ten arrows and sliced down his standard with one. He struck his charioteer with ten arrows and made him tremble. Gangeya took up another bow that was stronger still. In that great battle, in the twinkling of an eye and as soon as that other bow was taken up, Dhananjaya severed it into three with sharp and broad-headed arrows. In this fashion, he severed many bows.

“At this, Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, determined that he would not fight with Bibhatsu any more. However, he was pierced by twenty-five kshudrakas and thus pierced, the great archer spoke to Duhshasana. ‘This maharatha Pandava Partha is enraged in the battle. In this encounter, he has shot many thousands of arrows towards me. No one is capable of vanquishing him in battle, not even the wielder of the vajra. No brave one is capable of defeating me, the gods, the danavas and the rakshasas, not to speak of extremely weak mortals.’ While he was speaking thus, Phalguna placed Shikhandi in the forefront of the battle and pierced Bhishma with sharp arrows. Bhishma was severely pierced by the sharp arrows released by the wielder of Gandiva. He smiled and spoke to Duhshasana again. ‘These are like vajra and thunder to the touch. They are sharp at the tip and have been released well. They have been shot in a continuous stream. These cannot be Shikhandi’s arrows. They have penetrated my firm

armour and have mangled my inner organs. They have struck me with the force of clubs. These cannot be Shikhandi's arrows. They are like Brahma's staff to the touch. They possess the force of the vajra and are impossible to resist. They are robbing me of my life. These cannot be Shikhandi's arrows. They are like angry serpents, full of virulent poison and with their tongues protruding. They are penetrating my inner organs. These cannot be Shikhandi's arrows. They are destroying my life, like messengers sent by Yama. They are like clubs and maces to the touch. These cannot be Shikhandi's arrows. They are slicing through my body, like the month of Magha distresses cattle.⁴⁵² These are Arjuna's arrows. These cannot be Shikhandi's arrows. All the kings together cannot cause me any grief. The only exception is the brave Jishnu, the wielder of Gandiva and with the monkey on his banner.' O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having spoken this, Shantanu's son hurled a javelin, as if he was going to burn up Pandava. It was flaming at the tip and had sparks throughout. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! While all the brave ones among the Kurus looked on, he⁴⁵³ used sharp arrows to sever it into three and made the three parts fall down. At this, Gangeya grasped a shield that was made of gold and a sword. He was determined to obtain victory, or go to the world of the hereafter. But before he could get down from his chariot, the armoured one⁴⁵⁴ shattered the shield into a hundred pieces and it was extraordinary.

“He roared like a lion and incited his soldiers. ‘Attack Gangeya. Do not have the slightest bit of fear.’ With javelins, lances, masses of arrows from every direction, spears, swords, many other weapons, vatsadantas and broad-headed arrows, all of them attacked the one who was fighting single-handed. The Pandavas let out terrible roars, like lions. O king! Your sons wished to see that Bhishma was victorious. They surrounded him and roared like lions. O Indra among kings! On the tenth day, when Bhishma and Arjuna clashed, there was a dreadful battle between those on your side and those of the enemy. In a short while, there was a whirlpool, like when Ganga meets the ocean. The soldiers fought, wishing to kill each other.

Because it was covered with blood, the earth became difficult to cross. It was impossible to distinguish the plain ground from the uneven. On the tenth day, stationed in that battle, though he was pierced in his vital organs, Bhishma killed ten thousand warriors. In a similar way, Partha Dhananjaya was stationed at the forefront of the army and drove away the soldiers from the centre of the Kuru army. We were scared of Dhananjaya, Kunti's son, who was carried on white horses. We were oppressed by his sharp arrows and fled from the great battle. The Souviras, the Kitavas, those from the east, those from the west, those from the north, the Malavas, the Abhishahas, the Shurasenas, the Shibis, the Vasatayas, the Shalvas, the Shrayas, the Trigartas, the Ambashthas and the Kekayas—warriors from these twelve⁴⁵⁵ countries were wounded and oppressed by the arrows, while Kiriti was fighting in that battle, wishing to kill Bhishma. The single one was surrounded by many from all directions. They defeated all the other Kurus and showered him with arrows. 'Bring down. Seize. Pierce. Tear.' O king! These and other tumultuous sounds were heard around Bhishma's chariot. Having slain hundreds and thousands with his shower of arrows, there wasn't even the span of a single finger on his body that was not mangled.

“While your sons looked on, thus the lord, your father, was wounded with sharp-tipped arrows released by Phalguna and fell down from his chariot. There was a little bit of the day left. When Bhishma fell down from his chariot, great sounds of lamentation were heard from the gods in heaven and the kings in every direction. On seeing that the great-souled grandfather had fallen down, together with Bhishma, all our hearts also fell down. When the mighty-armed one fell down, the earth seemed to roar. The great archer fell down, like an uprooted pole that has been erected in Indra's honour. Because he was covered with a large number of arrows, he did not touch the ground. The great archer, bull among men, was supine on a bed of arrows. When he fell down from the chariot, a divine essence permeated him. The clouds showered rain and the earth trembled.

“When he fell down, it was seen that the sun was diminished. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The brave one did not allow his senses to depart, but thought about the right time.⁴⁵⁶ He heard divine voices from everywhere in the sky. ‘Why should the great-souled Gangeya, tiger among men and the supreme among those who wield all weapons, decide on a time that is dakshinayana?’⁴⁵⁷ On hearing these words, Gangeya replied, ‘I am still here.’ Though he had fallen down on the ground, he retained his life. Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, wished to wait till uttarayana. Knowing his decision, Ganga, the daughter of the Himalayas, sent maharshis to him, in the form of swans. Adopting the forms of swans from Manasa,⁴⁵⁸ they swiftly arrived to see Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus. The grandfather, the best of men, was lying down on his bed of arrows. In the form of swans, the sages approached Bhishma. They saw Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kurus, on his bed of arrows. On seeing him, the great-souled ones circumambulated Gangeya, the best of the Bharata lineage. The learned ones spoke to each other. ‘The sun is in the south now. Why should the great-souled Bhishma depart during dakshinayana?’ Having spoken in this way, the swans started to leave for the southern direction. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing this, the immensely intelligent one began to think. Shantanu’s son then said, ‘I will never depart when the sun remains in the south. This is my resolution. I will leave for my earlier abode when the sun moves to the north. The swans have spoken the truth. I will retain my life, wishing for uttarayana. I have always had complete control about when I would give up my life. Therefore, I will retain my life, wishing to die during the northern course. This is the boon that my great-souled father granted me. His boon was that I could determine my time of death and let that come true. Since I possess control, I will retain my life.’ Lying down on the bed of arrows, he spoke these words to the swans.

“When the immensely energetic Bhishma, the head of the Kurus, fell down, the Pandavas and the Srinjayas roared like lions. O bull among the Bharata lineage! When that great spirit among the Bharatas was brought

down, your son did not know what to do. There was dreadful confusion among the Kurus then. With Duryodhana at the head, the kings sighed and wept. For a very long time, they were immersed in sorrow and were deprived of their senses. O great king! They were immobile and their minds were no longer on the fight. It was as if they had been grabbed by the thighs. They did not advance against the Pandavas. The immensely energetic Bhishma, Shantanu's son, who was incapable of being killed, had been brought down. O king! The great destruction of the Kurus seemed certain. The foremost among our brave ones had been brought down, mangled by sharp arrows. He had been vanquished by Savyasachi and we did not know what we should do. The Pandavas were victorious and obtained their supreme objective. All of those brave ones used arms like clubs to sound giant conch shells. O lord of men! The Somakas and the Panchalas were delighted. Those extremely powerful ones sounded thousands of tambourines. Bhimasena slapped his arms and roared dreadfully. When Gangeya had been brought down, the brave ones in both the armies laid down their weapons. Some lamented. Others ran around. And still others lost their senses. Others censured the life of kshatriyas and honoured Bhishma. The rishis and the ancestors praised the one who was great in his vows. The ancestors of the Bharatas also praised him. The valiant one resorted to the yoga described in the great Upanishads. The intelligent one meditated and remained there, wishing for the right time.”

CHAPTER 975(115)

‘Dhritarashtra said, “O Sanjaya! What was the state of the warriors without Bhishma? He was powerful and was like a god. He followed brahmacharya for the sake of his senior. When Bhishma did not strike Drupada's son because he despised him, I thought that the Kurus and the other kings had been killed. I cannot think of a greater misery. I am evil-minded and have heard about my father being brought down. O Sanjaya! My heart must certainly be made out of stone. On hearing that Bhishma has been brought down, it has not shattered into a hundred fragments. I cannot even think about Devavrata being brought down in the battle. In

earlier times, he could not be slain by Jamadagni's son, despite his use of divine weapons. What did Bhishma, lion among men and the one who desired victory, do when he had been brought down? O Sanjaya! Tell me."

'Sanjaya replied, "He was brought down on the ground in the evening. On seeing the aged grandfather of the Kurus, the sons of Dhritarashtra were distressed and the Panchalas were delighted. He lay down on that bed of arrows, without touching the ground. A tumultuous sound of lamentation arose among all the beings. He was like a tree that stood at the boundary of the assembly of the Kurus and he was brought down. O king! O lord of the earth! On seeing Bhishma, Shantanu's son, with his armour and standard shattered, the kshatriyas in both the armies, those of the Kurus and the Pandavas, were overcome with fear. The sky was covered in darkness and the sun lost its splendor. On seeing that Bhishma, Shantanu's son, had been brought down, the earth seemed to be shrieking. This was the best among those who were learned about the brahman. This was the best among those who knew about the objective of the brahman. While the bull among the Bharata lineage lay down, this is what all the beings said. In earlier times, when Shantanu was overcome by desire, he followed his father's command. The bull among men held up his seed. As the middle one among the Bharata lineage⁴⁵⁹ lay down on the bed of arrows, this is what the rishis, the siddhas and the charanas reflected. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When Bhishma, Shantanu's son and the grandfather of the Kurus, was brought down, your sons did not know what to do. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Their faces were pale and lost all their beauty. They were overcome with great shame and their heads hung down. Having obtained victory, the Pandavas were stationed at the heads of their ranks. All of them sounded great conch shells that were decorated with gold. O unblemished one! They loudly sounded trumpets. O king! We saw the immensely strong Bhimasena in the field of battle. Kounteya was sporting, overcome with great delight. The extremely strong one had killed many enemies in battle. The Kurus were overcome by great confusion. Karna and Duryodhana sighed repeatedly. When Bhishma, the chief among

the Kouravas, was brought down, a great lamentation of weakness arose amidst all of them.

““On seeing that Bhishma had fallen, your son, Duhshasana, used great speed and proceeded towards Drona’s army. The brave and armoured one, and his own soldiers, had been instructed by his brother.⁴⁶⁰ Urging his own army on, that tiger among men now departed. O great king! On seeing Duhshasana, the Kurus surrounded him, wishing to hear what he had to say. Kourava informed Drona that Bhishma had been brought down. Hearing this unpleasant news, Drona suddenly fell down from his chariot. O venerable one! Having regained his senses, Bharadvaja’s powerful son restrained his soldiers.⁴⁶¹ On seeing the Kurus withdraw, the Pandavas and their soldiers also retreated. They sent messengers on swift horses to instruct the respective soldiers everywhere to refrain from fighting. The kings removed their armour and went to the spot where Bhishma was. Hundreds and thousands of warriors withdrew from the battle. They went to the great-souled one, like the immortals before Prajapati. They approached the supine Bhishma, the bull among the Bharata lineage. The Kurus and the Pandavas showed him their obeisance and stood there. The Pandus and the Kurus bowed before him and stood there.

““The great-souled Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, spoke to them. ‘O immensely fortunate ones! Welcome. O maharathas! Welcome. I am delighted to see you. You are the equals of the immortals.’ With his head hanging down, he greeted them. ‘My head is hanging down. Please give me a pillow.’ The kings present there brought many soft and delicate pillows that were excellent. But the grandfather did not accept them. The tiger among men laughed and told those kings, ‘O kings! These are not appropriate for a hero’s bed.’ The best of men then saw and addressed Pandava, the maharatha of all the worlds. ‘O Dhananjaya! O long-armed one! My head is hanging down. Give me a pillow that you think to be appropriate.’ He honoured the grandfather and grasped his giant bow. With his eyes full of tears, he spoke these words. ‘O best of the Kurus! O supreme among those who wield all weapons! Command me. O invincible

one! O grandfather! I am your servant. What can I do for you?’ Shantanu’s son replied, ‘O son!⁴⁶² My head is hanging down. O best of the Kuru lineage! O Phalgun! Give me a pillow. O brave one! Quickly grant me one that is appropriate for this bed. O Partha! O mighty-armed one! You are the best of all archers. You know about the dharma of kshatriyas. You possess intelligence and qualities.’ Having been thus addressed, Phalgun quickly prepared to do as he had been instructed. He grasped Gandiva and arrows with drooping tufts. He took the permission of the great-souled one who was the middle one of the Bharata lineage. He shot three extremely forceful and sharp arrows and supported the head of his senior. Bhishma, the best of the Bharata lineage and learned about dharma and artha, was satisfied and praised Dhananjaya for having given him that pillow. Kunti’s son was the best of warriors and brought delight to his well-wishers. He spoke to him. ‘O Pandava! You have done well by giving me something that is appropriate for this bed. Had you done otherwise, I would have cursed you in rage. O mighty-armed one! This is the way in which kshatriyas should remain established in their dharma and sleep on a bed of arrows.’ Having spoken thus to Bibhatsu, he spoke to all the kings and princes. ‘See what Pandava has given me. I will sleep on this bed until the sun changes its path. Until it has traversed, the kings will be able to see me. When the sun goes beyond Vaishravana’s direction⁴⁶³ and the supremely energetic rays scorch the worlds from his chariot, I will give up my life, like a well-wisher who takes leave from a beloved one. O kings! Let a ditch be dug around the spot where I am. Pierced by a hundred arrows, I will worship the sun. O kings! Abjure the enmity and give up this battle.’ Many physicians came to him, those who were skilled in the knowledge of uprooting stakes. They possessed every kind of implement and were skilled and well-trained. On seeing them, Jahnavi’s son spoke these words. ‘Honour the physicians. Give them what needs to be given and let them go. I have been reduced to this state. What do I have to do with physicians? I have attained the supreme state that is praised by those who follow the dharma of kshatriyas. O lords of the earth! When I am

lying on a bed of arrows, this should not be my dharma now.⁴⁶⁴ O lords of men! I should be immolated with these arrows on my body.’ Having heard these words, your son, Duryodhana, honoured the physicians in accordance with what they deserved and gave them permission to leave.

“‘The lords of the different countries were overcome with great wonder. They beheld the supreme dharma on which the infinitely energetic Bhishma was established. O lord of men! Having given a pillow to your father, all the maharatha Pandavas and Kurus again approached the great-souled one, supine on that supreme bed. Having bowed before Bhishma, they circumambulated him. Having arranged for Bhishma’s protection, all those brave ones went to their own camps in the evening and reflected in great misery. With bodies covered in blood, they retired. The maharatha Pandavas were delighted at Bhishma’s downfall. At the appropriate time, Yadava approached the maharatha Pandavas and spoke to Yudhishtira, Dharma’s son. ‘O Kouravya! It is through good fortune that you have been victorious. It is through good fortune that Bhishma has been brought down. The maharatha was devoted to the truth and could not be slain by humans. He was skilled in the use of all weapons. O Partha! This was destiny. He could kill with his eyes. He could burn down with his terrible sight.’ Thus addressed, Dharmaraja replied to Janardana, ‘We have obtained victory through your favours. Your wrath is defeat. O Krishna! You are our refuge. You assure your devotees freedom from fear. O Keshava! It is not extraordinary that those whom you always protect in battle should be victorious. You are always devoted to our welfare. We always seek refuge in you. It is my view that this is not extraordinary at all.’ Having been thus addressed, Janardana smiled and said, ‘O supreme among kings! The words that you have spoken can only come from someone like you.’”

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‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! After night had passed, all the kings, the Pandavas and the sons of Dhritarashtra, approached the grandfather. The

brave one, supreme among the Kurus, was lying down on a bed meant for heroes. The kshatriyas showed their obeisance to the bull among the kshatriyas. There were maidens everywhere, with powdered sandalwood, fried paddy and garlands. There were women, children and aged ones, and others who had gathered as spectators. They approached Shantanu's son, who was like the dispeller of darkness.⁴⁶⁵ There were trumpets, courtesans, harlots, male dancers, female dancers and minor dancers. They approached the aged grandfather of the Kurus. The fighting ceased. The armour was cast aside. The Kurus and the Pandavas discarded their weapons. They approached the invincible Devavrata, the destroyer of enemies. They greeted each other affectionately, according to age, as they used to do in earlier times.⁴⁶⁶ With the hundreds of kings assembled there, Bhishma looked resplendent. The descendant of the Bharata lineage was as radiant as a circle of gods in the firmament. The kings who honoured the grandfather were as brilliant as the gods worshipping the grandfather,⁴⁶⁷ the lord of the gods.

“O bull among the Bharata lineage! Bhishma bore his pain with fortitude. He was scorched by the arrows. But he spoke to the kings with a cheerful mind and addressed them. ‘My body is tormented with these arrows. I am losing my senses because of the arrows. I wish to have a drink.’ O king! All the kshatriyas brought him excellent water pots filled with cold water.’ On seeing that these had been brought, Bhishma, Shantanu's son, replied, ‘O son!⁴⁶⁸ I am incapable of using objects of human pleasure now. I am lying on a bed of arrows, away from human enjoyment. I am established here, waiting for the moon and the sun to return along their paths.’ Having spoken in this way, Shantanu's son rebuked all those kings. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He addressed the mighty-armed Dhananjaya. The mighty-armed one approached and paid his respects to the grandfather. He stood there, hands joined in salutation, and asked, ‘What will I do?’ O king! On seeing Pandava Dhananjaya standing there in obeisance, Bhishma, with dharma in his soul, affectionately addressed him. ‘My body is burning. I am covered

with these great arrows. My inner organs are in pain and my mouth is dry. O Arjuna! You can use your bow to give me water for my body. O great archer! You alone are capable of giving me water in accordance with what is proper.’ Having been thus addressed, the valiant Arjuna mounted his chariot. He grasped Gandiva with force and stretched the bow. The sound of the palm against the string of the bow was like the clap of thunder. On hearing this, all the beings and all the kings were frightened. On his chariot, the supreme of rathas circumambulated the supine one, who was the best of the Bharatas and supreme among those who wielded all weapons. The immensely illustrious one invoked and affixed a flaming arrow. While all the worlds looked on, he applied the *parjanya* weapon. Partha pierced the earth to Bhishma’s right side. A clear and pure stream of water arose. It was cool and like amrita. It possessed a divine fragrance. With that cool stream of water, Partha satisfied Bhishma, the bull among the Kurus, whose valour and deeds were divine. Partha was like Shakra in his deeds. At this deed of his, all of the lords of the earth were struck with great wonder. On beholding Bibhatsu’s superhuman and extraordinary deed, all the Kurus trembled, like cows stricken by the cold. All the kings waved their upper garments in wonder. A tremendous sound of conch shells and the beating of drums was heard everywhere.

“O king! In the presence of all the kings, Shantanu’s son was satisfied. He honoured Bibhatsu and spoke to him. ‘O mighty-armed one! O descendant of the Kuru lineage! You have done something wonderful. O infinitely radiant one! Narada spoke of you as an ancient rishi. With Vasudeva as your aide, you will perform great deeds that even Indra of the gods, with the other gods, will not attempt. O Partha! Those who are aware know that you will bring about the destruction of all the kshatriyas. Among all the brave men on earth, you alone are the one who can wield the bow. You are the best among men on earth, like Garuda among the birds, like the ocean is the best among all stores of water, like the cow is the best among all quadrupeds, like the sun is supreme among those with energy, Himalaya is foremost among all mountains, the brahmana is best among all classes and you are the foremost among all archers.

Dhritarashtra's son paid no heed to the words repeatedly spoken by me and those uttered by Vidura, Drona, Rama,⁴⁶⁹ Janardana and Sanjaya. He is beyond all intelligence. Duryodhana is like one who is bereft of his senses. He paid no attention to my words. He will soon be overwhelmed by Bhima's strength and weapons and will be killed.' On hearing these words, Duryodhana, the Indra among the Kouravas, became distressed.

“Shantanu's son glanced at him and said, 'O king! Transcend your anger and listen to my words. O Duryodhana! You have seen how the intelligent Partha created a stream of water that is cool and bears the fragrance of amrita. There is no one else in this world capable of accomplishing this feat. Agneya, Varuna, Soumya, Vayavya, Vaishnava, Aindra, Pashupata, Brahma, Parameshtha, Prajapatya, Dhatu, Tvashtu, Savitu⁴⁷⁰ and all the other divine weapons—among all the men on earth, Dhananjaya alone is the one who knows them. So does Krishna, Devaki's son. But no one else knows them. O son!⁴⁷¹ It is impossible to vanquish Pandava in battle. The deeds of the great-souled one are superhuman. He is spirited in battle. The brave one is the ornament of any battle. He is accomplished in battle. O king! O son! Make efforts towards peace. O son! As long as the mighty-armed Krishna controls himself in this assembly of Kurus, make efforts towards peace with the brave Parthas. O son! As long as your army is not destroyed through straight-tufted arrows shot by Arjuna, make efforts to bring about peace. O king! As long as your brothers and the remnants of these many kings remain stationed in battle, endeavour to bring about peace. O son! As long as your army is not consumed by the blazing anger in Yudhishtira's eyes, endeavour to bring about peace. O great king! O son! As long as Nakula, Sahadeva and Pandava Bhimasena do not destroy your entire army, it will please me if there is fraternal feeling between you and the Pandavas. O son! Let this feud end with my death. Have peace with the Pandavas. O unblemished one! Let these words spoken by me be acceptable to you. I think that this will be good for you and for the lineage. Abandon your anger and let there be peace with the Parthas. What Phalguna has already done is sufficient.

Let Bhishma's death lead to affection. O king! Be pacified and let the remaining ones be alive. Give the Pandavas half of the kingdom. Let Dharmaraja go to Indraprastha. O Indra among the Kouravas! Do not kill your friends and be censured by the kings. Do not be famous for your evil deeds. With my end, let there be peace among the subjects. Let the kings depart cheerfully. O king! Let father and son, maternal uncle and nephew and brother and brother be happily united. If you do not accept my words, because you are overcome by delusion and because your intelligence is clouded, at the appropriate time, you will be destroyed and will remember all of Bhishma's words. I tell you truthfully that you will bear a great burden.' Having spoken these affectionate words to Bharata in the hearing of those kings, the son of the one who goes to the ocean became silent. His inner organs were in pain because of the stakes. Nevertheless, he overcame his pain and controlled his soul.”

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‘Sanjaya said, “O great king! After Bhishma, Shantanu's descendant had become silent, all the kings again returned to their own abodes. On hearing that Bhishma had been brought down, Radheya, bull among men, swiftly came to him, partly because he was terrified. He saw the great-souled one, lying down on his bed of arrows, like the lord, the god Kartikeya, lying down after his birth.⁴⁷² The brave one's eyes were closed. His voice choked with tears, Vrisha⁴⁷³ worshipped the feet of the immensely radiant one who had fallen down. ‘O best of the Kurus! I am Radheya. I have been in your sight, but you have always regarded me with hate.’ He spoke these words. On hearing these words, the aged Kuru used his strength to slowly open his closed eyes and glanced at him. He spoke these affectionate words. He asked the guards to leave and once they were alone, glanced at him with benevolence.

“Gangeya embraced him with one arm, like a father towards a son. ‘Come. Come. You have always been my adversary and have always sought to rival me. If you had not come before me, there is no doubt that it

would not have been good for you. You are a Kounteya. You are not Radheya. I have known this from Narada and from Krishna Dvaipayana⁴⁷⁴ and Keshava. There is no doubt about this. O son!⁴⁷⁵ I do not hate you. I am telling you this truthfully. I have spoken harsh words towards you for the sake of reducing your energy. It is my view that you hated the Pandavas without any reason. O descendant of the sun! That is the reason I have spoken many harsh words to you. I know your valour in battle and that the enemy cannot withstand you. I know your devotion towards brahmanas, your valour and your supreme attachment to generosity. There is no man like you and you are like an immortal. I spoke harsh words towards you to prevent dissension in the lineage. In the use of arrows, in aiming at a target, in dexterity and in the strength of your weapons, there is no one like you, with the exception of Phalguna and the great-souled Krishna. O Karna! You went to the king's capital and as a single archer, defeated all the kings in battle, for the sake of the king of the Kurus. The powerful King Jarasandha was invincible in an encounter and prided himself in battle. But even he wasn't your equal. You are devoted to brahmanas. You are truthful. You are like the sun in your energy and are superior to anyone else. You have been born from a god. You are invincible in battle. You are more than a man on earth. Today, I am giving up the anger I felt towards you earlier. Human endeavour is incapable of overturning destiny. O destroyer of enemies! The brave Pandavas are your brothers. O mighty-armed one! If you wish to please me, go to them. O son of the sun! With my end, let all the enmity be over. Let all the kings on earth be free from all danger.'

“Karna replied, ‘O immensely wise one! I know all this. There is no doubt about anything that you have said. O invincible one! I am a Kounteya and have not been born from a suta. But Kunti abandoned me and I was brought up by a suta. I have enjoyed Duryodhana's prosperity and have no interest in making that false now. My prosperity, body, life and fame are all for Duryodhana's sake. O one who is greatly generous! I am prepared to give all that up. I have depended on Suyodhana and have always angered the Pandavas. The outcome is inevitable and no one is

capable of counteracting it. Who can overcome destiny through human enterprise? O grandfather! The omens indicate the destruction of the earth. These were noticed and spoken about in the assembly by you. I know everything about the Pandavas and Vasudeva being invincible to all other men. Nevertheless, I am interested in fighting. O father!⁴⁷⁶ You have always cheerfully given me permission to fight. O brave one! Since I have decided to fight, please give me permission. You should also forgive me any harsh and unpleasant words that I may have spoken against you, out of anger or folly, and any injurious acts that I may have performed.’

“‘Bhishma replied, ‘O Karna! If you cannot discard the extremely terrible enmity that has been created, I grant you permission. Fight with a desire to attain heaven. Be free of anger and intolerance and perform the acts of the king to the best of your capacity and endeavour. Observe the conduct of the virtuous. I grant you the permission. May you obtain what you desire. There is no doubt that you will attain the worlds obtained through the practice of the dharma of kshatriyas. Resort to strength and valour and fight, without any vanity. There is nothing more desired by a kshatriya than a battle in accordance with dharma. I tried for a very long time to bring about peace. But I was not successful. Where there is dharma, victory will be there.’”

‘Sanjaya said, “When Gangeya had spoken in this way, Radheya honoured him and obtained his favours. He then ascended his chariot and drove towards your son.””

This ends Bhishma Parva.